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THE MASTER
OF
THE DAY OF JUDGMENT

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The MASTER *of the* DAY *of* JUDGMENT

☆ LEO PERUTZ ☆

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN

BY

HEDWIG SINGER

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THE MASTER OF THE DAY OF JUDGMENT
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INTRODUCTION

Leo Perutz, whose reputation as a German author of distinction has long been established, was born in Prague. Prague (Praha) is to-day the capital of the young Czecho-Slovakian Republic. Before 1918 Prague had for centuries belonged to that cultural sphere, the focal point of which was Vienna. Hence it is natural that the German spirit should emigrate from a Prague that has changed, in part passing on into the great German empire, whence it originally came, and, especially, finding its way to Vienna, the scene of action of the present volume.

Prague was built in the early Middle Ages, built by Germans in the midst of a Slav population. The mixture of the German and the Slavic spirit have given the city a curiously sombre and mysterious character. Yet Prague is unquestionably the most interesting city north of the Alps; none other equals it as a breeding-ground for tales of adventure and horror. When one crosses the "Karlsbrücke," black with age, which leads from the modern city to the "lesser side" (Kleinseite), one feels that within a few minutes one has passed from

the present into the seventeenth and sixteenth centuries. The atmosphere of alchemy and witchcraft, of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation hovers over and weaves about the ancient houses, the narrow, precipitous alleys. It is not by chance that the Renaissance palace of Wallenstein, the great captain of the Thirty Years' War, stands at the entrance to this city quarter.

One must have grown up in Prague, in order to write like Perutz, and one must at least have seen the city in order fully to understand him. He won his spurs with novels whose ambients are the era of discovery and the Middle Ages. The scene of his narrations, in nearly every instance, is laid in the past. He can make the days of old live again, and his characters, with regard to their thoughts and motions, dwell far removed from the activities of our own time. Yet in this very quality lies the strength of this inconceivably talented story-teller— his men and women of the past are alive to-day. They have adapted themselves to our own time, just as Prague's "Kleinseite," on the left bank of the Moldavia river, directly adjoins the modern city. Gustav Meyrink, another novelist of Prague, who in his "Golem" has led us into Prague's medieval ghetto, and in many other of his stories, to the haunted heretical burrows of the "Old City," is further removed from us. Perutz has emigrated to Vienna spiritually as well as physically. The happy Viennese spirit, which turns naturally to all that is alive and actual, has transformed the erstwhile historical novelist of Prague into the author of the present detective story.

We are taken into the villa of an aristocratic Viennese family and made acquainted with an Austrian cavalry officer. Chamber music is in order, and the officer plays the violin. He has had an affair with his host's wife previous to her marriage. Her brother Felix knows about it, but her husband—a famous actor of the Vienna "Burgtheater"—is ignorant of the fact. This environment is purely Viennese, of the Vienna of yesterday, exactly as Arthur Schnitzler has transmitted it to literature. Yet suddenly we find ourselves transferred to the Florence of the Medici, and, in an ancient tome we read the organist Pompeo dei Bene's report of the terrible vision seen by the painter Salimbeni, a vision of the Day of Judgment. The Viennese actor, Eugene Bischoff, and—with a horrible sequential logic—four or five additional victims of the curse, one after the other, are killed. The effect is reactive and transcends time and space. The power and skill with which Perutz has interconnected the Viennese actuality of 1908 and the mystic unreality of the vision, constitute the main charm of his book. Before we have a chance to consider the probability or improbability of what has happened, Perutz, by a surprising turn, snatches us out of all our doubts, and frees us from a tension he himself has called forth, by means of the "Open sesame!" offered by a psychologist who does not live in Sigmund Freud's age and city in vain.

To say more regarding the contents of this book in an introduction would be manifestly unfair to the reader, whose right it is himself to experience its mysteries and their solution. We

will permit ourselves no more than a final psychoanalytical remark anent the pleasure derived from the mysterious and an olden historical garbing. All of us—and the author more keenly than others—are aware of our psychic duality with regard to the conscious and the unconscious, what Freud has called: "The I and the It." The civilized human being's sense of guilt harks back to the depths of the "It." In all probability we are born with it. Perhaps this sense, derived from the past of the race, acts as did Messer Salimbeni's curse in the old folio. Since we are always guilty, and that because of reasons other than our personal misdeeds, we are also, in this sense, always innocent. Can we not—Perutz asks—by the power of our mind, rid ourselves of the guilt of a crime we have actually committed, by again changing back the reality into the unreality of that primal guilt of ours? Thus Perutz's novel not only runs its course between Vienna and the Florence of the Medici, but also, in a strange foreshortening, between guilt real and unreal, between the "I" and the "It." One might say that the author had discovered a new trick among the practically inexhaustible possibilities offered by the detective story, were it not wrong to term so profound and beautiful a thought a trick.

Dr. Fritz Wittels

THE MASTER
OF
THE DAY OF JUDGMENT

CHAPTER I

AN EPILOGUE IN PLACE OF A PROLOGUE

My task is accomplished. I have described that chain of tragic events into which I was so strangely drawn in the autumn of 1909. I have told the whole truth, I have omitted nothing, suppressed nothing. Why should I? I have no reason for hiding anything.

While writing, I found that I had retained a mass of irrelevant detail; conversations, ideas, trivial daily happenings. And yet I somehow have in my mind an entirely wrong impression as to the length of the time during which these events developed. Even now it seems as if they had filled many weeks. This is not so. I know the exact date when Dr. Gorsky took me to the house of the Bischoffs to play chamber-music; it was on a Sunday, the 26th of September, 1909. To this moment I re-

member very clearly every detail of that day's events. The morning mail had brought me a letter from Norway and I had tried to decipher the post-mark, thinking the while of the girl-student who had been my neighbour at dinner on board the little steamer ferrying us across the Stavanger fjord. She had promised to write. When I opened the letter it contained only the prospectus of a hotel for winter sports at the Hardanger glacier.

I was disappointed. A little later I went to the Fencing Club and was caught in a shower in Floriani Street. I took shelter in a doorway and discovered a neglected garden with a Baroque fountain. An old lady came up to me and asked whether a milliner by the name of Kreutzner lived in the house. All this stands out as clearly as if it had happened but yesterday. Then the rain ceased, the sun shone again. A day of warm breezes and cloudless skies—thus I remember the 26th of September of 1909.

I lunched in a garden-restaurant with two fellow-officers from my regiment. I did not read the newspapers until after lunch. There were articles in them on the Balkan question, on the politics of the Young Turks—surprising how well I remember all this. A leading article dealt with the journey of the King of England, another with the plans of the Sultan of Turkey. A headline in leaded type shouted: "Waiting attitude of Abdul Hamid." Details of the lives of Shefket Pasha and Niazi Bey —who recollects these names to-day? A fire had broken out during the night at the North Western Railway Station, de-

stroying large stocks of timber, the papers said. A students' association advertised a performance of Buechner's *Danton.* The Opera House announced a performance of the *Goetterdaemmerung* with a singer from Breslau in the part of Hagen. There was an Exhibition of pictures by Jan Toorop and Lovis Corinth, and everyone went to see them. Somewhere, in St. Petersburg I think, strikes were on; at Salzburg a church had been broken into, and from Rome came news of rowdy scenes in the Consulta. I also found a notice in very small print reporting the collapse of the Bergstein Bank. This did not surprise me—I had foreseen it and withdrawn my deposits in time. But I remembered that an acquaintance of mine, the actor Bischoff, had likewise entrusted his fortune to this bank. "I ought to have warned him," flashed through my mind. But would he have believed me? He always thought me misinformed. Why meddle with other people's business? And at the same time I remembered a talk I had had a few days previous with the Manager of the State Theatres. The conversation had turned on Eugene Bischoff, and the Manager said: "This man is growing old, and unfortunately I cannot help him," and then added some remarks about the younger actors who were pressing forward. If my impressions were correct, there was not much chance of Bischoff's engagement being renewed. And now the added misfortune of the collapse of Bergstein and Company.

All this comes back to me. The 26th of September stands out so plastically in my mind that I wonder how it could have

happened that for some little while I placed the day when the three of us entered the house on the Dominikaner Bastei towards the middle of October. The yellow chestnut leaves on the garden paths, the first autumn frosts—this complex of unconscious memories must have misled me. The decision came on the 30th of September as I can prove by my notes of that time.

This tragic mystery—it baffled us during the five days from September 26th to September 30th. Five days of a strange hunt, a pursuit of an invisible enemy, a fiend not of flesh and blood, but a visitant from by-gone ages.

We found a blood-stained trail and followed it; silently the gates of the past opened to us. None of us knew where the path led to, and it seems, now, as if we had been groping our way through a long dark passage at the end of which there stood a monster with a deadly club upraised, waiting to hit out. The club fell, and again, and yet a third time. And I should have shared Eugene Bischoff's and Solgrub's terrible fate, but for the quick grip that pulled me back to life at the last moment.

On its way throughout the centuries, how many victims has it claimed, this blood-stained monster? The fate of many in the past I now see in a different light. Amongst the names of former owners of the book I found on the inside of its cover a faded signature. Did I read it aright? You whom the world acclaimed its noblest bard, did this monster silence you, too, for ever? But no! there is no sense in probing and searching,

nor in recalling the many great dead whom you may have made your victims. Clouds shroud the picture. The past remains silent. No answer will ever reach us from out of the dark.

. . . . .

And it has not done with me yet; pictures rise from the depth of stored memories, pursue me by night and day; but, thank God! they come now as faint, shadowy phantoms. The nerve in my brain is asleep again, but its sleep is none too deep. Now and then a sudden fear overcomes me. I rush to the window; I feel that up there that terrible light is breaking in huge waves over the skies, and I can hardly realise that it is the sun veiled in silvery mists, surrounded by purple clouds. Wherever I look, I seem to see the eternal colours of this world. Never since that day have I beheld that gruesome hue, that red of blood, sin and fire. But the shadows remain, they enshroud me—will they never disappear from my life? It may be, my poor haunted soul, that in writing it all down I have shaken off what so distresses me. My story lies behind me, a heap of loose sheets; I have made a cross over it. What more have I to do with it? I push it aside as if someone else had lived it, thought it out, some other person had written it, not I.

I had another reason for writing down what I wished to forget yet could not.

Shortly before his death Solgrub destroyed a parchment. He did it to prevent any more victims from falling into the same fateful error. But was this parchment the only one of its kind? Is it not possible that in some forgotten corner another copy

of the story of the Florentine organist exists—faded, dusty, gnawed by rats—somewhere amongst the odds and ends of a curiosity shop or behind the folios of a library, maybe on the floor of a bazaar in Ezinghian, Diarbekir, or Dshaipur, hidden under rugs, scimitars, Coran covers, waiting to rise hungry for its prey?

We are all creatures in whom the Master's intentions miscarried. We all nurture a terrible foe within us, and know it not. He lies still as if dead. Woe to us when he awakes! May no human eye ever again behold the red of blood, sin and fire.

Yes, God help me, I have seen it.

And that is why I wrote this story. It lies before me a sheaf of closely covered pages—without a proper beginning. I know that full well.

How did it begin? I sat at my desk smoking a pipe when Dr. Gorsky called.

Dr. Edward von Gorsky. In his life-time he was hardly known outside a circle of professional friends. His death made him famous the world over. He fell a victim to a disease of which he had made a study in Bosnia.

I see him now as he stood at my desk: slightly deformed, badly shaven, negligent in his dress, his ready-made tie askew. He held his nose tightly between thumb and index finger. "That damned pipe of yours," he began; "can you not live without it? One smells the smoke right down the street."

"It is the smell of foreign railway stations, and I like it," I replied, getting up to welcome him.

"The devil take it," he grunted. "Where is your fiddle? We want you to play at Eugene Bischoff's. I have orders to bring you along." I looked at him. "Did you see to-day's newspapers?" I asked. "Oh, you, too, know it already. Everyone, it seems, does know, except Eugene Bischoff himself. A sad affair. It must be kept from him. He has some differences with his manager, and until these are settled he is not to know anything. You ought to have seen Dina; she stands behind him like a protecting archangel. Come along, Baron, I think to-day she will welcome any kind of diversion."

I felt a burning desire to see Dina. But I was very wary—pretended to be undecided, doubtful about going.

"A little chamber-music," Dr. Gorsky insisted. "I have my 'cello in the cab. If you like, one of Brahms' piano-trios."

And as if to encourage me, he softly whistled the first bars of the scherzo in B major.

CHAPTER II

The windows of the room in which we played opened on the garden. When looking up from my music, I could see the green doors of the summer house in which Eugene Bischoff locked himself whenever a new part was sent to him. There he studied his rôles, learnt them by heart, remaining invisible during many hours for days. Late in the evening one might observe his silhouette passing and repassing the lighted windows, and watch his weird movements and gesticulations. Glaring sunshine lay over the gravel paths. The deaf old gardener, crouching on the lawn between the fuchsia and the dahlia beds, cut the grass with an even movement of his right arm which was tiring to the eyes; children played noisily in a neighbouring garden. They were sailing boats and flying kites, and an old lady sat near them, basking in the afternoon sun, feeding the sparrows with breadcrumbs from her bag. Far in the background, across the meadow path, people passed towards the woods: Sunday excursionists under sun-shades, people pushing perambulators.

It was about four o'clock when we began to play; we had finished two of Beethoven's violin and piano sonatas and a Schubert trio. At last, after tea, came the turn of the B major. I love this trio, especially the first movement, so full of solemn joy. It irritated me, therefore, when, as soon as we had begun, a knock at the door disturbed us. On Eugene Bischoff's sonorous "Come in!" a young man pushed into the room. His face seemed familiar to me, though I could not recall how and where I had met him before. He closed the door somewhat noisily, in spite of his evident endeavour not to disturb us. He was tall, very fair-haired, with an almost square head; I disliked him from the very first—he reminded me of a whale.

Dina looked up from the keys, and, to my great joy, no more than nodded to the belated guest. She went on with her playing, while her husband rose from the couch to welcome him. By looking over my music I could see them whispering to each other, the "whale" pointing towards me with a hardly noticeable questioning motion of his head: "Who is that? What is he doing here?" and I assumed that he was an intimate friend to behave so informally.

When we had finished the first movement Eugene Bischoff introduced the stranger.

"Consulting Engineer Waldemar Solgrub, a colleague of my brother-in-law's," and pointing to me, "Baron von Yosch, who very kindly plays Felix's part in our trio." Felix, hearing his name, waved his bandaged left hand. A burn, caused during work in his laboratory, prevented him from playing the violin.

Not to be entirely useless, he turned the leaves of our music for us.

Dr. Gorsky, looking like a smiling, friendly gnome, appeared from behind his 'cello. The engineer shook his hand very hurriedly and went across to Dina Bischoff. And while he bent over her hand he held it much longer than necessary; it was almost painful to watch. As he stood thus bent, talking intently to her, I noticed that he was not as young as I thought him at first. His short fair hair was slightly grey at the temples. He might have been close to forty, although his manners were those of a youth of twenty.

At last he dropped Dina's hand.

"I believe we know each other already, Mr. Virtuoso?"

"My name is Baron von Yosch," I replied, coldly and very politely.

The "whale" noticed the rebuff. He had not caught my name when introduced, he said. He had a way of throwing his words which reminded me vividly of the ways of his prototype when blowing sea-water through his nostrils. "But surely you remember me?" he asked.

"I am sorry, but I do not."

"If I am not mistaken, five weeks ago——"

"You are mistaken," I replied. "Five weeks ago I was travelling abroad."

"Just so, travelling in Norway. And we sat hours facing each other between Christiania and Bergen. Am I right?"

He stirred the tea Dina had placed before him. She had heard his last words and watched us curiously, saying:

"So you met each other before?"

"Oh yes. But Baron vonYosch was no more communicative during the journey across the Hardanger Fjord than he is to-day."

"Quite possible," I replied. "It is unfortunately my way; I seldom make acquaintances when travelling."

And this ended the matter for me. Eugene Bischoff remarked on the marvellous memory for faces shown once again by the engineer. Eugene Bischoff was always ready to find all kinds of wonderful qualities and talents in his friends.

"Nonsense," said the engineer, drinking his tea, "this is really not an extraordinary feat of memory. Of course, Baron von Yosch's face is like thousands of others—you will forgive me, Baron, for saying so? Your resemblance to many other people is marvellous. But your English briar—that certainly has a very distinctive physiognomy. I recognised you by it at once."

I found his jokes rather commonplace; he took too much notice of me. I really do not know why he honoured me thus.

"But do tell us," shouted the "whale," "do tell us about your great success in Berlin, Eugene. All the papers were full of it. And how far are you with the part of King Richard? Are you making any headway with it?"

"Shall we not proceed with our music?" I proposed.

The "whale" made an exaggerated gesture of apology.

"You had not finished? A thousand pardons. Really I thought . . . you see I am absolutely unmusical."

I assured him most politely that I had noticed it.

He pretended not to hear my remark. He sat down, and stretching his legs, picked up some photographs, becoming absorbed in the contemplation of a picture representing Eugene Bischoff as one of the Shakespearean Kings.

I began to tune my violin.

"We only made a stop between the first and second movement in order to welcome you, Mr. Solgrub."

And behind me I heard Dina whisper, "Why are you so curt with Solgrub?"

I must have blushed furiously at this moment; I always did when she addressed me. I turned round and noticed the fine oval of her face, the surprised look in her dark eyes. And I tried to find an answer to justify my dislike for people who break into a room at a wrong moment. True, they cannot help it—they may be the best and kindest beings, I explained; I admit I am wronging them. Theirs is a special knack of coming at the precise moment when they disturb one most. I know I am wronging them, but I cannot suppress my dislike, I simply cannot do it, I told her.

But why lie to myself, I thought? It is jealousy, pitiful jealousy, the pain of love betrayed. When I am near Dina I turn into a watch-dog. Whoever approaches her is my foe. Every one of her looks, every one of her words must be

mine, mine alone. That I cannot rise, go, make an end for ever! That hurts, that gnaws!

Hush!

Dr. Gorsky gave a sign,—two taps with his bow on the stand, and we began the second movement.

CHAPTER III

The second movement of the trio in B major —how often its rhythms have thrilled and shaken me. I never could play it to the end without being intensely depressed; and yet I love it passionately. A scherzo, but what a scherzo! It begins with gruesome, blood-curdling gaiety. A ghostly laughter sweeps through space, a wild weird carnival of cloven-hoofed figures. Suddenly a solitary human voice arises out of this infernal bacchanalia—the voice of a soul lost in darkness, the cry of a human tortured by fear. Soon Satan's laughter breaks through again, rends the pure harmonies and tears the song to shreds. Faintly, softly, the voice begins once more, finds its melody and rises high, so high, as if to fly on it to another world. But victory is with the demons of hell—the day has broken, the Day of Judgment, Satan triumphs over the lost soul and the plaintive human voice falls from its height and vanishes, swallowed up in a laughter of despair.

. . . . .

When we had finished the movement, I sat silently among silent beings.

And then the gloom and shadows lifted, the dream of the Day of Judgment vanished and I was free again.

Dr. Gorsky rose and paced the room slowly; Eugene Bischoff remained quiet and thoughtful, while Solgrub stretched himself as if just waking. Then he took a cigarette from the box on the table and closed the lid with a bang.

My eyes followed Dina. Just as the last thought before falling asleep comes back to one on waking, so the thought of Dina's anger before we started the scherzo returned and held me. I wished to pacify her. The wish to do so grew stronger and stronger, and the more I looked at her, the more intense it became, until I could not think of anything else. I suppose this childish desire was an after-effect of the music.

She turned towards me: "Well, Baron Yosch, why so silent? What are you thinking of?"

"I thought of my dog Zamor."

I said this looking straight into her eyes. Dina and I—we both knew why I said it. She knew the dog well. She winced and pretended not to hear. Now I had angered her again. I ought not to have said this; ought not to have reminded her of my little dog Zamor, not just at this moment, when all her thoughts were with this stranger—the "whale."

Dr. Gorsky packed his 'cello and bow into their case.

"I think that is enough for to-day," he suggested. "We will not force the third movement on Solgrub, eh?"

Dina threw her head back and softly sang the theme of the adagio.

"Listen, is it not as if one rowed in a boat?"

To my astonishment the "whale," too, began to hum the theme of the third movement, and almost correctly, only somewhat quickly. And he said: "As in a boat? No, I think the gliding rhythm misleads you. It brings different ideas to me."

"I see that you know the B major trio very well," I remarked, and it seemed as if by saying this I had pacified Dina.

She turned impulsively towards me: "You must know, Baron, our friend Solgrub is not as unmusical as he pretends to be. But he feels somehow bound to show that he stands above music and all other useless arts. Your profession demands that of you, Waldemar, doesn't it? And he wants me to believe that but for the fact that his picture is to be found on postcards and in illustrated papers, he would not recognise my husband as an artist. No need to say anything, Waldemar, I know you!"

The "whale" behaved as if this remark did not concern him at all. He took a book from the shelves, turned the leaves. But it was quite evident that he liked to be the centre of the conversation and to be analysed by Dina.

Dina's brother joined the discussion: "And music affects Solgrub more deeply than any of us. The Russian soul, I suppose? He sees music in pictures. A landscape, and the sea with clouds and breakers, and the setting sun; or a man moving

strangely along a path—what was it the last time? A herd of cassowaries in flight, and what not."

And Dina: "When I played the last movement of the Appassionata—it was the Appassionata, Waldemar, which gave you the queer vision of the swearing trooper?"

I thought angrily and bitterly: Have they gone so far already, these two? She plays Beethoven Sonatas to him. Thus it began between us two—between Dina and myself.

The "whale" dropped his book. "Appassionata third movement," he said dreamily, and leaned back and closed his eyes. "I see clearly, I cannot tell you how clearly, a cripple with a wooden leg. I could describe every button on his uniform, so vividly I see him. An old soldier of Napoleon's time, swearing as he limps across the room."

"He curses and swears? The poor fellow! Very likely he has lost his little savings." I said it without any afterthought, just jokingly. And the very moment it was said, I realised what a painful impression my remark must make. And so it did. Dr. Gorsky shook his head at me; Felix sent me an angry look and warningly lifted his bandaged hand to his mouth; Dina stared at me, surprised and frightened. An embarrassing silence followed and I felt myself blushing. But Eugene Bischoff had not noticed anything. He turned to Solgrub: "I often envied you your plastic way of seeing, Solgrub, and I, the idol of the gallery, the hero of the students of the dramatic academies present a sorry sight besides you. You ought to have been an actor, Solgrub."

Dr. Gorsky broke out: "That from you, Bischoff? from you so alive with forms and beings! From you, in whose brain live kings and rebels, chancellors, popes, murderers, rogues, archangels, beggars, and even God Almighty Himself."

"But I never saw them so vividly before me, as Solgrub sees his wooden-legged old soldier. I only saw their shadows; changing, colourless, formless clouds. If I could describe the button on the uniform like Solgrub—good God! what a great artist I should be!"

I felt the resignation in his words. He was growing old, he was the great Eugene Bischoff no longer. He was made to feel it and felt it himself; he was struggling against oncoming age and did not want to acknowledge it. Poor friend, I thought, how hopelessly sad the coming years will be for you, the years of decay.

And I recalled my talk with the manager of the State Theatres. If someone repeated his remarks to him, if I myself, for example, said: "You know, my dear Eugene, that I am on friendly terms with your manager. We discuss many things. Last time—I may tell you, I am sure you will not take the matter too seriously—well, the last time he remarked, of course only joking— Good God, what thoughts! God forbid that he should ever learn it. It would mean the end. He is fundamentally so weak, without any hold, a breeze would knock him over!"

Dina's brother was talking to him. The kind fellow poured out all the professional terms he could remember; spoke of

psychological detail, deep insight into the spirit of the drama —but Bischoff shook his head: "Don't try to deceive me, my dear Felix. You know as well as I do where I fail. What you are saying is right enough, but it is not what matters most. Believe me, all this can be learnt, or it comes of itself with the task put before you. But creative imagination cannot be learnt. One either has got it or one has not. That imagination which builds up worlds out of nothing—I lack it, most of us lack it. Yes, I know what you wish to say, Dina. I made my way, whatever the papers may say about me. But does any one of you know what a dry, matter-of-fact human being I really am? Something happens that ought to rob one of peace and sleep: one ought to shudder, ought to feel as in a night-mare—but somehow the thing strikes me no more than a glimpse at the report of an accident in my morning paper!"

"Have you read to-day's papers?" I asked. I thought of the St. Petersburg strikes; Eugene Bischoff was very interested in social questions.

"No. I haven't seen a paper. I looked for it this morning. Dina! what has become of the newspaper?"

Dina turned pale. Of course. I might have thought of it. The paper with the news of the closing of the Bergstein Bank had been hidden from Bischoff. There! I had blundered again. One blunder after another.

But Dina regained her presence of mind quickly enough, and as if mentioning something unimportant: "The paper—I think I saw it somewhere in the garden. I'll find it for you.

But you just started to tell us something interesting, Euge
do go on, please."

Dina's brother stood next to me. He whispered between
teeth: "How long do you intend to continue your expe
ments, Baron?"

What could he mean? True, I had been absent-minded, I h
blundered; but there was nothing more to it. What cou
there be?

CHAPTER IV

Eugene Bischoff paced the room. He seemed at a loss to express his thoughts. Suddenly he stopped in front of me, looked at me searchingly; his face expressed restlessness, uncertainty, almost distrust. I hardly knew why, but his gaze made me uncomfortable.

"I know a curious story, Baron Yosch," he said. "A story to make one's flesh creep. When I have told it to you, you may lie awake at night unable to close an eye." He tapped his forehead: "There is a nerve up here," he said, "a nerve which must not be disturbed. It works all right in ordinary affairs, but it is not strong enough to deal with terror and fear, raging, tearing fear. To meet that, I lack the strength."

"Do begin at the beginning, Bischoff," urged Dr. Gorsky. "I do not know whether I can make you understand this weird, curious case," replied Bischoff. "You see, telling stories was never my strong point. Perhaps the affair will not seem so exciting to you as it is to me. Well——"

"Why all this preamble—do begin, Eugene," said Solgrub, flipping the ash from his cigarette.

"Listen then, and you may think what you like of my story. Some time ago, I made the acquaintance of a young naval officer, home on long leave for family reasons. It was a peculiar affair that occupied him that time. A younger brother of his, a painter, studying at the academy, had lived in town. He seems to have been a very gifted young fellow. I saw some of his pictures: 'A Group of Children'—'The Nurse'—'Bathing Girl'—among others. This young man committed suicide. Apparently there was no reason for such a desperate act. The boy had no financial worries, no love affair, he was strong and healthy, the case seemed inexplicable. And the brother——"

"Such cases are far more frequent than people think," interrupted Dr. Gorsky. "Police reports generally speak of them as 'suicide while temporarily insane.'"

"Yes, so it was in this case, too. But the family was dissatisfied with the result of the police investigation. It seemed incredible to the parents that the son should have left them without a word of good-bye. Not even the usual 'Dear parents, forgive me, but I cannot act otherwise' was found amongst his papers. Nor had there ever been a hint in his letters to lead them to believe that he contemplated taking his life. The family doubted that he had committed suicide and the elder brother came to Vienna to clear up the mystery.

"The young officer had laid his plans carefully, and carried them out consistently and energetically. He took his brother's

old apartment, followed his mode of life, took his habits, and went so far as to avoid all company but his brother's friends and acquaintances. He became a student at the Academy and spent some time every day at his brother's favourite café. He wore his brother's suits, joined an Italian course his brother had attended, and followed it regularly, although as a naval officer he knew and spoke Italian perfectly. Nothing could shake him in the conviction that to live exactly as his brother had lived was the only way in which to solve the mystery of the death his brother had died. Whether he drew nearer his goal during this time, I do not know. One day he returned home very late. His landlady noticed it when serving his lunch, for it was against his carefully regulated routine of life. Although not exactly in a temper, he passed some remarks about the food, which had grown cold. He told his landlady that he intended to go to the opera in the evening, expressed the hope that he might still be able to get a ticket, and ordered some cold supper to be ready in his room at eleven o'clock.

"About a quarter of an hour later the maid was sent up with his coffee. The door of the room was locked, but she heard him walking about. The girl knocked and said: 'Your coffee, sir!' placing the tray on a chair by the door. When she returned after a while to fetch the empty cup, the coffee still stood where she had left it. Getting no reply to her repeated knocks, she listened—but all remained silent for a few moments. Then she caught some words in a foreign tongue she could not understand and immediately after, a loud cry. The

maid shook the door, roused the house by her calls; the landlady arrived and between them they broke the door in—only to find on entering that the room was empty. Through the open windows confused noises reached them from the street below and they understood what had happened. Down there a crowd was gathering round a body. Not half a minute before the young officer had jumped from the window—his cigarette, still alight, was lying on his desk."

"Jumped from the window?" asked Engineer Solgrub, "That is surprising. Surely as an officer he had some weapons!"

"Just so! A pistol in perfect order but unloaded was found in the drawer of his writing table. It was a nine-millimetre army pistol and a box of cartridges was in the same drawer."

"Go on!" urged Dr. Gorsky.

"There is nothing more to tell. He committed suicide just as his brother had done before him. I do not know whether he ever found the key to the riddle. But if he did he kept the secret."

"But surely," broke out Dr. Gorsky, "he left a letter, a word excusing his deed—at least an explanation for his parents?"

"No."

It was Engineer Solgrub and not Eugene Bischoff who uttered this decided "No." And he continued: "Don't you understand that the man had no time? It is this that makes the case so extraordinary. He had not a moment to load his pistol, how could he have found time to write a farewell letter?"

"You are mistaken, Solgrub," came from Eugene Bischoff, "He left a communication, a word or rather part of a word——"

"Rather circumstantial," said the doctor with a twinkle in his eyes, inferring that he believed the story to be a romance.

"And then, the point of his pencil broke and the paper was torn across," continued Bischoff.

"And the word?"

"Scribbled in evident haste and hardly readable: 'Horrib——'."

A silence fell. Then Solgrub uttered a surprised "Ah!"

Dina rose to turn on the light. It flooded the room, but the feeling of awe which had overcome us during Bischoff's tale would not lift. Dr. Gorsky alone viewed the matter with some scepticism.

"Own up, Bischoff, you invented this story to make our flesh creep."

Eugene Bischoff shook his head.

"No, Doctor, I didn't invent anything. What I told you happened no longer than two weeks ago. I neither added nor omitted anything. One does meet curious things sometimes, Doctor! What is your opinion of the case, Solgrub?"

"Murder," replied the Engineer. "I am sure a very uncommon kind of murder. But where is the culprit? How did he enter the room? How did he leave it? This case needs thinking over quietly and thoroughly."

He looked at his watch.

"It is late. I must say good-bye."

"Nonsense," declared Bischoff, "you will all stay for supper. And afterwards we will sit together and have a talk on a more cheerful subject."

"How would it be, for instance, if this assembly of art-lovers were given the treat of a performance of some of your latest parts?" suggested Dr. Gorsky.

The papers had told us that Eugene Bischoff would appear in the rôle of King Richard III within a few days. He did not seem to like Dr. Gorsky's suggestion. He frowned.

"At any other time with the greatest pleasure, my friends, but not to-day."

Dina and her brother pressed him: Why not to-day?—What a queer mood! And we were all so anxious to hear him!

"Those of us whom you honour with your personal friendship, Bischoff, would naturally like you to show them some preference over the miserable plebs of the stalls and boxes," said the Doctor. But Eugene Bischoff shook his head and persisted in his refusal.

"No—not to-day. I really cannot do it. I could only give you something unfinished, and I should not like to do that."

"Just a kind of dress rehearsal before a few good friends," proposed Solgrub.

"Don't press me, please. You all know I do not easily refuse, for acting gives me real pleasure. But to-day I cannot do it. My conception of King Richard is not quite formed yet. I

must visualise him—must see him before me, that belongs to it——"

Dr. Gorsky seemed to give in to Bischoff. But he winked at me, for he had an excellent, well-proved method to overcome the actor's resistance and he meant to use it. Careful and wily, he began with the most innocent expression on his face to tell about a mediocre Berlin actor whom he had seen, he said, in the part. He praised the man to the skies: "You know, Bischoff, I am not a so-called gallery enthusiast, but this Semblinsky—it is simply fabulous. The ideas of the man! The way he throws his glove into the air, catches it, while stretching on the palace steps like a cat in the sun!"

And as if to give Bischoff an idea of the performance he began with pathos and an abundance of gestures:

"Cheated of feature by dissembling nature
Unfinished, deformed——"

He stopped: "No, deformed comes first."

"Deformed, unfinished, sent before my time
Into this breathing world——"

"That will do, Doctor!" Eugene Bischoff spoke gently as yet.

"Into this breathing world—(don't interrupt me)
Scarce half made up,

And that so lamely and unfashionable
That dogs bark at me as I halt by them";

"Enough," called Bischoff. "Stop! Stop! You make me feel ill——"

But nothing daunted, Gorsky continued:

"Why I, in this piping time of peace
Have no delight to pass away the time;
Unless to spy my shadow in the sun,
And descant on mine own deformity.
And therefore—since I cannot prove a lover
To entertain these fair well-spoken days,—
I am determined to prove a villain——"

"And I am determined to break your neck if you go on," broke in Bischoff savagely. "Why, you are turning Gloucester into a sentimental clown! Richard III is a beast of prey, a monster, a demon, anything you like—but he is a man, a king, for all that, not a hysterical punchinello, damn it!"

As Dr. Gorsky had foreseen, the part took hold of Bischoff. He paced the room excitedly: "I shall show you King Richard! Silence! You shall hear the monologue."

"Well, I have my own ideas of the part," said Dr. Gorsky coolly. "But then, you as an actor may see it differently and I am ready to learn."

A glance full of contempt and malice met him—Gloucester facing his wretched brother Clarence.

"Open the windows, while I go to the summer-house," said Bischoff. "The smoke in here is unbearable. I shall not be more than a few minutes."

"Do you intend to make up?" asked Felix. "Why should you? We will forego King Richard's mask."

Eugene Bischoff was strangely excited. Never before had I seen him in such a state of exaltation. His eyes shone and flickered, as he replied: "Make up? Oh no, but I must see the button on the uniform. Leave me a little while to myself, I shall not be long."

As he left the room he turned at the door: "Your Semblinsky, doctor, is a dunce. I saw him as Iago, and it was an appalling performance!"

I watched Bischoff as he crossed the garden. He talked and gesticulated and barely missed knocking down his old gardener, who still knelt on the lawn, cutting the grass in the falling dusk. Bischoff entered the summer-house and a moment later the windows lit up, throwing moving shadows and flickering lights into the large, silent garden.

CHAPTER V

In an effort to shorten the pause until Bischoff should make his entry, Dr. Gorsky continued his Shakespearean recital. He went on enthusiastically, with violent gestures, to the great annoyance of us all, and even ventured a rendition of the jester's songs from *King Lear,* to tunes improvised on the spur of the moment.

Solgrub, reclining in his easy chair, smoked one cigarette after another. He appeared to be lost in a study of the rug pattern at his feet. The mysterious, tragic suicide of the young naval officer seemed to occupy his mind to the exclusion of all else. Now and again he looked up and watched Dr. Gorsky, as one might watch a rare and incomprehensible phenomenon. Once he made an attempt to stop the funny little man in his poetic flight. Leaning forward, he caught the doctor's arm:

"Listen, Doctor. There is one thing I cannot understand in this affair. Now, do listen, please! Suppose it was a case of suicide, committed on a sudden impulse, why should the man

have locked himself in his room a quarter of an hour before? Why should he do so, unless he contemplated suicide? Can you explain that, Doctor?"

Dr. Gorsky moved his hand as if to wave away some irritating insect, and continued declaiming:

"That lord that counsell'd thee
To give away thy land
Come place him here by me
Do thou for him stand:——"

"Please, Doctor, do stop this fooling!" insisted Solgrub. "Just consider: The man has locked himself in his room for a quarter of an hour. He has time to make his arrangements, and he jumps out of the window! Surely no officer with a pistol and ammunition at hand would behave in such a manner." But Dr. Gorsky took no notice of the interruption, and went on with the Shakespearean performance. He stood in the middle of the room, the very image of a small, deformed, sentimental hobgoblin, playing on an imaginary lute and singing with rapt expression:

"The sweet and bitter fool
Will presently appear——"

At last Solgrub realised that it was hopeless to try and claim Dr. Gorsky's attention. He therefore turned to me:

"Don't you think that there is something fundamentally contradictory in this affair, Baron Yosch? Do remind me to ask Eugene Bischoff about it before we leave."

"Where has Dina gone?" asked Felix. "She did right to leave the room, it is full of smoke," said Solgrub, putting out his cigarette. "*Pars magna fui*, I admit, and we forgot to open the windows."

I left the room unnoticed, softly closed the door. I walked through the garden, following the path which, skirting the lawn, leads down to the fence. I hoped to meet Dina, but could not find her in any of her favourite nooks. An open book was lying on a garden table; it must have lain there forgotten. Its leaves were damp, perhaps from yesterday's rain, perhaps from the dew that had begun to fall. I thought I saw a figure in a nook by the wall. Dina! But I found that I had mistaken for a human some garden tools: a rake, watering-cans, a basket, a torn hammock swinging in the breeze.

. . . . .

I do not know how long I remained in the garden. Perhaps it was a long, long time. I may have been dreaming, leaning against a tree.

. . . . .

Suddenly, shouts of laughter reached me from the house. Somebody ran his hand over the keys of the piano from the lowest octave to the high shrill notes. Felix appeared at the window like a large black shadow.

"Eugene! Hullo, Eugene!" he called into the dusky garden.

And, as he recognised me: "Oh, it is you, Baron? Where have you been? Where have you come from?" he asked anxiously.

Dr. Gorsky appeared behind him. He, too, recognised me and began to quote:

"Here, in the moon's pale light, we meet——"

He broke off suddenly, for one of the others pulled him away from the window. I heard him shout: "How dare you, traitor!" Then all was quiet. The lamps on the first floor were lit, and, in the mellow radiance, I saw Dina moving to and fro as she laid the table on the veranda for supper. I mounted the wooden stairs which lead from the garden directly to the veranda. Dina, hearing my footsteps, looked round, shading her eyes with her hand.

"Is it you, Gottfried?" she asked.

I sat down, silently watching her as she placed plates and glasses on the white tablecloth. She was breathing deeply and evenly, like a child in a sound, dreamless sleep. The wind shook and bent the chestnut trees under the windows, and faded brown leaves were being driven along the gravel paths. The old gardener continued his work by the light of a lantern he had placed at his side. Its dim light mingled curiously with the glare from the brightly-lit windows of the garden house, which fell in a wide band across the lawn.

I received a terrifying shock with bewildering suddenness. Someone called me: "Yosch! Yosch!" It came across the garden. My name—just my name. But the voice! It overrawed

me: it expressed so much sorrow, and rage, and horror, and surprise.

Dina stood listening, then she turned to me with a questioning look: "That is Eugene calling," she said, "What does he want, I wonder?"

"Dina! Dina!" Eugene Bischoff's voice reached us a second time, but it was a different voice now. No longer did it convey anger or surprise, but anguish, sorrow and despair.

"Here I am, Eugene! What is it?" called Dina, leaning over the balcony. A moment's silence followed, then a shot rang out and, immediately after it, a second one!

. . . . .

I saw Dina start. Then she stood as one transfixed, incapable of moving or uttering a sound. Yet I could not stay with her, I had to go down and see what had happened.

It seems to me now that at that moment I had a vision of two burglars scaling the wall of the garden to steal some fruit. I do not know how it happened, but I found myself in a dark room on the ground floor. Walls were all around me, and I could not find the door, nor the window, nor the switch for the light. I kept on turning round and round, helpless, angry, touching the walls with my outstretched hands.

Then steps approached, I heard a door open, a match flared up and I saw Solgrub in the doorway.

"What is it? What has happened?" I asked, anxious yet happy to be no longer alone. The vague picture of thieves climbing the walls became clear and distinct. I felt sure now

tha: there had been three of them—one, a small bearded creature, was hanging over the wall; the second one, who had stumbled after jumping from the wall, was just getting up; while the third hurried towards the summer-house, taking cover behind shrubs and tree trunks.

"What has happened?" I asked again. Solgrub's pale, bewildered face disappeared, as the match in his hand went out. "I am looking for Dina," I heard him say. "She must not go to him. It is too horrible. One of us will have to stay with her."

"She is upstairs on the veranda."

"How could you leave her alone?" he cried, already out of the door.

I went to the Music Room. It was deserted—an overturned chair lay across the door. Then down into the garden. The path seemed endless, and I had a moment of impatience as I walked towards the summer-house. The door stood wide open and I went in.

Even before I saw anything, I knew that there had been no struggle with burglars, that Eugene Bischoff had committed suicide. I could not say why, but I felt certain of it. He was lying on the floor, by the writing-table, his face towards me. His coat and waistcoat were unbuttoned. He held a revolver in his right hand. In falling he had brought down with him some books, the inkstand, a small bust of Iffland. Dr. Gorsky was kneeling by his side.

He was still breathing; his hands trembled, he opened his eyes and moved his head.

Was it imagination? It seemed to me that as he recognised me, an expression of wonder and boundless surprise passed over his distorted face.

He tried to raise himself, meaning to speak, but moaned and fell back. The expression of wonder passed from his face and gave way to a look of hatred. And this look, full of hate, kept following me. It pursued and held me. I knew it was meant for me, for me alone, this terrible look, yet I could not see the reason for it, could not understand it. Nor could I understand myself. How was it that, at the sight of death, I felt neither fear nor horror, nothing but a slight *malaise* at Bischoff's look, and an aversion to contact with the widening pool of blood on the rug?

Dr. Gorsky rose. Eugene Bischoff's mobile expressive face had changed to a silent, rigid mask.

From the door I heard Felix's voice: "She is coming—she is already in the garden. Doctor, what are we to do?"

Dr. Gorsky took a raincoat from a peg and covered Eugene Bischoff's lifeless body.

"Go and meet her, Doctor," begged Felix; "I cannot face her."

I saw Dina coming towards the summer-house, Solgrub at her side, trying to stop her. A feeling of weariness overcame me, my feet would hardly carry me, and I longed to throw myself on the lawn, to sleep, to rest.... It is nothing, I told myself, nothing ... just a passing weakness. I have been running too quickly, I said to myself, that is all. As Dina dis-

appeared through the door of the summer-house, I experienced a strange thing.

The deaf old gardener stood next to me, still bending over his work, as if nothing had happened. And nothing *had* happened, as far as he was concerned. He had not heard the cry, or the shot, but as I stood at his side, he must have felt my look; he straightened himself and gazed at me.

"You called me, sir," he said.

I shook my head. I had not called him.

He would not believe me, however.

Through his deaf ears the noise had reached him faintly, indistinctly, and he imagined that someone had called him.

"Oh yes, you did call me, sir," he repeated peevishly, and as he went on with his work, he watched me distrustfully out of the corner of his eye.

And now it overcame me, the awe which I had not felt in there, near Bischoff's body. I shook with terror—shivers ran down my spine. No! I did not call him, I did not—yet there he stood staring at me, whilst he cut the blades of grass, swinging his scythe. It was the old gardener, but for a moment he looked like "Death" in an old print.

CHAPTER VI

It was for a brief moment only, and immediately I regained control of myself and my nerves. I smiled and shook my head. It must have been in a sort of waking dream that I mistook the simple old servant for the silent messenger, the ferryman of the River Styx.

I strolled through the garden, down the slope where there is a quiet corner between the conservatory and the fence, and sat down at the table that stood in the recess. Had it been raining, or was it the falling dew? The wet leaves and branches of the lilac bushes brushed against my face; a drop fell on my hand. Some fir-trees stood somewhere near. I could not see them in the dusk, but their fragrance reached me in my retreat.

It was very quiet and restful. In deep breaths, I inhaled the cool damp air; the wind played over my face as I sat listening to the silence of the night. I had a strange gnawing fear that I might be missed. What if they looked for me and found me here? No! I wanted to be alone; I could not talk to anyone

now. I was afraid of facing Dina and her brother—after all, what could I say to them? Comfort them with cheap, meaningless words I abhorred? I realised that my disappearance might be taken for what in fact it was: a flight from the import of the moment. Yet I could not help it. I remembered that as a child I had behaved in the same way over and over again, how on my mother's birthday I had hidden myself when the moment had come for me to repeat the little rhymes and wishes I had so carefully learnt by heart many days before, how I had crept from my hiding-place only when the party was long over and all the guests had gone.

Next door someone began to play a mouth organ. A few bars of a hackneyed popular waltz came floating across from an open kitchen-window. I must have heard that waltz many times before, but I could not remember its name—was it "Valse Bleue"—"Souvenir de Moscou?" Was it not strange that this tune should bring relief to my overwrought nerves, should lift the weight that oppressed me? "Valse Bleue!" An appropriate dirge for a human being. Over there in the summer-house lay one who had ceased to be of this world, a citizen now of another realm, a strange being beyond our comprehension. But the awe in facing the sublime and the tragic, the inconceivable and inevitable—where was it? The rhythm of life and death, it was very like a hackneyed waltz tune. Thus we enter and thus we depart this life. That Something which overwhelms us and shakes us to the very depths of our being gives place to a mocking smile on the face of the Spirit for

Whom, from the dawn of day, the agony, sorrow and death of human beings is no more than a cycle, eternally repeated.

The music broke off abruptly, and for some minutes an oppressive silence prevailed, disturbed only by the pattering of the raindrops which fell from the maple-trees on to the roof of the conservatory. Then the mouth organ began again, and now it played a march. Near-by a church clock was striking. I counted the strokes. Ten o'clock! So late already! I sat listening to this mouth organ, while over there, in the house, Dina and her brother—— They might need me—— They might be looking for me.Dina could not possibly think of everything!

And I remembered the many things which must be seen to. Of course, in such cases the police have to be informed; the police surgeon has to examine the body; arrangements have to be made with the undertaker—and here I was sitting listening to music coming from a neighbour's kitchen! The newspapers, too, must be told—impossible that Dina should think of all this now.

That was what we, her friends, were here for. Not a word about suicide must get into the papers. A cab—a drive to the various newspaper offices. "Sudden death of famous actor"—"at the height of his power"—"an irreparable loss to his family, to the German stage and to the great number of his admirers."

And the offices of the theatre. Good God! no one seems to have thought of it. That was the most important thing, of course—next week's playbill would have to be changed. I

wondered whether the office would be open so late on a Sunday night? Past ten—one would have to call up at once; or, better still, get into touch with the Director himself. Why did I not think of it all before—I, a friend of the family! No more time must be wasted. I wanted to get up, I felt the impulse to act, to do all that was necessary at the moment, to take upon myself all the worries and troubles of these dreadful hours. It was urgent to telephone. It had to be done at once, I told myself again—in five minutes it might be too late, the office might then be closed. And King Richard was scheduled for Tuesday! Yet I remained in my place, faint and feeble and dead-tired, incapable of moving a limb.

I am ill, I whispered to myself, making another effort to rise. Feverish, of course, after sitting out in the cold night-air; and oh! the damp! It may be one's death. And I pulled the newspaper from my pocket—heaven knows why I had kept it—I spread it carefully on the seat to avoid sitting any longer on the damp boards. Then, of a sudden, my old doctor's voice rang in my ears; I heard him as distinctly as if he had been standing by my side: "Ill, my dear Baron? I suppose we have lived a little too fast lately, eh? We are a bit tired, aren't we? A short rest in bed, two—three days. After all we are not missing anything. A soft warm bed, some hot tea, won't do us any harm, and rest, rest, rest! No letters, no papers, no visitors; that will do us a world of good! Now do obey your old doctor's orders—he means well, and go home at once, nothing more to do for us here. We are ill; feverish,

eh? Let me feel your pulse!" Obediently I raised my hand, but woke to reality with a start to find myself sitting alone on the cold damp seat. Yes! I was ill; I shook and trembled, my teeth were chattering. Home! away without a word of good-bye. Who wanted or needed me here anyhow? Dina and Felix knew best what to do, and they had Dr. Gorsky with them; I was only in their way.

Good night, garden! Good night, mouth organ, you weird companion of this lonely hour—and good night to you, dear old Eugene, good night for evermore!

I rose, tired, wet and cold. I felt for my hat. Wherever had I left it? As I was groping about for it on the table, my fingers touched the open book, which had lain forgotten on the table for many days. Whether it was the dampness of this touch or the cold gust of wind that met my face, an unremembered Something brought back the fragrance of a bygone day. For a short moment only, but for that moment it stood before my eyes vividly, and I recognised it. An early autumn morning on the hills, the smell of withering potato plants blowing towards us from the fields. We walked along the path to the woods. The green walls of the hills rose before us and a fine white mist floated over the tree-tops. There was frost in the air, the sky was a cold, hard blue, and on the bushes along the path were flaming red berries. Dina rested her head on my shoulder, the breeze played in her short brown curls. We stopped and softly she recited some verses about red autumn leaves and silver mists over trees and hills.

The picture vanished as quickly as it had appeared, and another took its place. It showed a house high up in the mountains. New Year's Eve! Deep snow all around, the windows covered with ice—how good it was that the host had the fire lit in the little iron stove.—It glows red hot, the wood is crackling, sparks are flying. Outside, my dog is whining, he scratches at the door and wants to come in. "That is Zamor," Dina says softly. "Do let him in. He will not give us away." I tear myself from Dina's arms and lips. As I open the door an icy draught passes into the room, and from afar the sound of clinking glasses and dance music reaches us——

And then this picture vanished, too, and nothing remained but the cold blast, and the dance music from the kitchen next door; and poignant grief and despair. Oh, God! How could it have happened that we lost each other? Can that which has held two beings in a loving bond vanish as if it had never been? To-day we had been sitting side by side and not a word had we to say to each other! With unperceived suddenness she had slipped from my arms into another's, and it was I who now stood at the door scratching and whining.

And at this moment I became, for the first time, really conscious of Eugene Bischoff's death. "Dead." The meaning of the word hit me. Dead!

I was full of the wonder of it, that chance should bring me here to-day, just at this fateful hour. No, not chance—it was fated thus, for there are eternal laws we must obey. And I had

meant to go and steal away at this very moment—how could I have thought of it!

Up in the house Dina sat in the dark room, waiting:

"Is it you, Gottfried? How long you have been!"

"I went to open the door, sweetheart, as you wanted me to. Now I am back again."

. . . . .

The lights were still on in the summer-house. I stood hidden behind a chestnut tree, waiting.

The door opened and I heard voices. Felix came out, carrying a lantern, walking slowly towards the house. Two shadowy figures followed: Dina and Dr. Gorsky.

She did not see me. "Dina," I called, as she passed me—so close that her arm nearly touched me.

The lantern disappeared up the steps into the house, but for just a moment longer I saw in its light Dina and the shadows thrown by the trees and shrubs. Then the garden fell back into darkness.

"You are still here?" I heard Dina say. "What for?"

Something touched my forehead—something like a soft warm hand—a falling chestnut leaf.

"I was looking for my dog Zamor," I replied in a low voice, and that was to tell her that I had been thinking of old times.

A long silence.

"If you have a trace of human feelings left, go—go at once," came Dina's voice faintly at last.

CHAPTER VII

I watched her as she went, the sound of her dear voice still ringing in my ears. She had been gone for quite a while before the meaning of her words dawned upon me. I stood amazed, deeply hurt. But then my anger rose. I resented her words bitterly; to wrong me thus! I was to go? No, I could not do that now. My teeth had ceased to chatter, fever and weariness had gone. I would stay—I would insist on an explanation from Felix and Dr. Gorsky. I had done nothing to hurt her, had I? A terrible misfortune had overtaken her, a misfortune which might possibly have been averted; but surely I was not responsible for it! Why was he left alone at all? Not for a single moment should he have been left. And where did he get the revolver? Did they really think I was the cause of it all? I knew that at such moments one does not weigh one's words, but that was one more reason why I should stay. Evidently an explanation was due to me. And if it were a misunderstanding?—obviously that was it—a misunderstanding, and it was ridiculous to be so excited about it.

I had misinterpreted Dina's words—she simply meant that I should go home for there was nothing I could do. No one had thought to accuse me. My overwrought nerves had played me false. I decided to wait for Dr. Gorsky; he had been present, had heard everything; he would confirm that I had misunderstood Dina's words.

I should not have to wait long before Felix and the doctor returned. Poor Eugene—they could not leave him alone all night, lying on the floor.

I stepped to the window softly, like a thief in the dark of night, to steal a glance at him. He still lay on the floor. Someone had spread a rug over him. It was a tartan rug. Once I had seen him play Macbeth, and as I stood looking through the window Lady Macbeth's words came to my mind:

"Here's the smell of blood still.
All the perfumes of Arabia——"

The weariness and fever returned. My teeth began to chatter again, cold drops broke out on my forehead, but I fought against my weakness. "Nonsense," I told myself, "surely these words do not apply in this case." And I pushed the door open and went in. But once within, my energy left me, gave way to alarm; it was the first time that I had been alone with Eugene Bischoff's body.

There he was, covered except for his right hand. It held the revolver no longer. Someone had picked it up, and placed

it on the little round table which stood in the centre of the room. As I approached to have a look at the weapon, I noticed that I was not alone.

Solgrub was standing behind the writing table, bending over something I could not see. It looked as if he were studying the pattern of the wallpaper. Hearing my footsteps he turned round:

"Oh! It is you, Baron? Why, you look ghastly: this unfortunate affair has shaken you badly."

He stood before me, his hands in his pockets, a cigarette between his lips, smoking calmly with his friend's dead body at his feet! He looked quite unimpressed.

"You are facing a corpse for the first time in your life, are you? You are lucky, Baron. Oh! you peace-time officers! I thought so by the way you walked. You may step hard, you will not wake *him* again."

I remained silent. Solgrub threw the cigarette butt into the ash-tray on the writing table a few feet away from where he stood, and lit another cigarette immediately.

"I am a German from the Baltic," he continued. "I was born in Mitau, and I have been through the Russo-Japanese war."

"Tshu-shima?" I asked. I do not know why the name of just this naval fight should have come to my mind. I thought that he must have served as engineer on a battleship.

"No, Baron, Munho. Did you ever hear of it?"

I shook my head.

"Munho. It is not the name of a town or a village. It is a river—yellow waters flowing between the hills. It would be better not to remember it. One morning they were lying there, more than five hundred of them, one next to the other, with burnt hands and contorted yellow faces. It was devilish, devilish!"

"A mine?" I asked.

"High tension currents. My work; twelve hundred volts. Sometimes when I think of it I say: Well, what of it? It was in eastern Asia, five thousand miles away, and five years have passed since, and all that you saw at that moment is dust and ashes now. But what is the good of it? It remains, a sight like that—burns into one's brain like a red-hot iron; one can never forget it."

He stopped talking and blew wonderful round smoke rings. He seemed to do everything connected with smoking with the ease and precision of a juggler.

"People talk of abolishing war," he continued after a little while. He pointed to the revolver. "This kind of thing is to be abolished. What good will it do? Malice will still remain, malice the deadliest of all weapons!"

"Why does he tell me that?" I asked myself alarmed. "Why does he look at me so strangely? Does he accuse me of causing Eugene Bischoff's death?" And I said:

"He died of his own accord, Solgrub."

"Of his own accord, you say—of his own accord?" shouted Solgrub so violently that he startled me. "Are you sure of it,

Baron? You know, I was the first one to come into the room. The door was locked, so I broke the window—you can still see the glass over there. I saw his face. I was the first one to see it. And let me tell you, the horror on the faces of those five hundred men on the Munho, who, storming the hill in the dark, *knew* that they would touch the charged wires, *that* horror, it was as nothing compared with the expression on Eugene Bischoff's face, when I entered this room. He was in an agony of mad fear, of something hidden from the rest of us. It was from this fear that he fled into death as into a haven. You think he left life willingly? No, Baron! Eugene Bischoff has been hounded to death."

He lifted the cover from Bischoff's face and looked down upon it.

"Hounded to death," he said again with a shaking voice, quite foreign to his usual manner.

I turned away. I could not bear the sight.

"You mean?" I could hardly speak, something was gripping my throat. "If I understand you aright, you mean that he has heard—that he has found out somehow—I——"

"Found out what? What are you talking about?"

"I suppose you know that the bank in which his small fortune was deposited has gone bankrupt?"

"Has it? No, I did not know—it is the first I have heard of it. But it was not that. That terrible fear that hung over him, the fear I saw in his face, was of another kind. Money? No—

no money matter caused that fear. You should have seen his face, Baron. It is not a thing one can explain."

A silence followed, then Solgrub began again:

"He could still speak when I first came into the room. He said something in a voice so low, one could hardly hear it. But I understood him. Curious words they were—but from a dying man——"

He paced the room.

"Strange words! I really knew him very little. How much do we know of each other when all is said and done? You, Baron, knew him better, or at least longer. Tell me, where did he stand in religious matters? What were his relations with his Church? Was he a devout Christian? A religious man?"

"Religious? Superstitious, like most actors. He had his superstitions in everyday affairs, but a believer in the sense of the Church? No, I never noticed that."

"And this fairy tale for credulous children—should it have been his last thought after all?" said Solgrub, staring at me.

I did not reply, did not know of what he was speaking. I do not think he expected an answer at all.

"Never mind," he muttered. "Another one of the mysteries we shall never fathom." He took the revolver from the table, gazing at it absent-mindedly, evidently thinking of something else all the while. Then he put the weapon back.

"Where did he get the revolver?" I asked. "Was it his own?"

"The revolver?" said Solgrub, as one coming out of a

dream. "Oh, yes, it was his own. Felix tells me that he always had it on him. When he came home at night he had to pass some lonely building plots and fields. He risked meeting shady fellows, and he was very apprehensive of encounters in the dark. That is the tragedy of it, that he had the loaded revolver in his pocket. To jump out of the window would not have been fatal in his case. Some bruises, a sprained ankle, perhaps not even as much as that."

He opened one of the windows and looked out into the night. The wind filled the curtains like sails. Outside, the chestnut trees were sighing in the breeze. The papers on the writing table were fluttering, and a leaf from the chestnut trees found its way into the room and was gliding noiselessly along the floor. Solgrub closed the window and turned to me:

"He fought courageously; by God, he did! His assassin had no easy task."

"His assassin?"

"Yes. His assassin. He has been hounded to death, I tell you! Look! Here he stood; and over there stood the other one," and Solgrub pointed to the spot on the wall I found him examining when I entered the room.

"They faced each other," he said in a low voice, looking at me. "They faced each other like two men fighting a duel."

I shuddered to hear him talk as if he had watched the tragedy.

"And who," I asked him, almost choking, "who do you think murdered him?"

Solgrub shrugged his shoulders without a word.

"You are still here, Baron?" came a voice from the door. "Why aren't you gone?"

I turned round, startled. In the doorway stood Dr. Gorsky and he was addressing me.

"Go! For heaven's sake, go at once!"

Too late! It was too late to go. Behind the Doctor I saw Felix. He pushed the Doctor aside and stood before me.

I looked at him. How like his sister he was at this moment! The same strange oval of the face, the same stubborn expression round the mouth.

"Still here, Baron?" he asked in a cold polite tone—such a contrast to Dr. Gorsky's violent outbreak. "This is lucky indeed. Now we can settle this affair at once."

CHAPTER VIII

The moment I faced Dina's brother, I knew instinctively that I beheld a deadly enemy. I also knew that it would be useless to try to escape the coming collision. I could not have told myself what there was between us, but felt that whatever it was I must stay, and no matter what happened, I must face my adversary.

Dr. Gorsky foresaw what was coming and tried to stop us.

"Felix!" he said reproachfully, "Felix, do remember where we are," and he pointed to Eugene Bischoff's covered body. "Must you speak now—and here of all places?"

"It is better so, Doctor," replied Felix, looking at me fixedly all the time. "It is really rather fortunate that Captain von Yosch should still be here."

Captain von Yosch! That was not how Felix usually spoke to me, and I knew only too well what that meant. Dr. Gorsky stood between us. For a short moment he hesitated, then he shrugged his shoulders and walked towards the door. But Felix recalled him.

"Do stay, please, Doctor," he said. "It may be that something will happen which would make the presence of a witness desirable." Dr. Gorsky did not understand immediately the implication of this remark. He was evidently embarrassed, and looked at me as though he wished to excuse himself for overhearing our conversation. He sat down at the edge of the writing table with the deliberate air of one expressing his readiness to leave at once should it be desired. Solgrub, whom nobody had asked to stay, took this for an invitation to do so, and settled down in the only available easy-chair. In a complicated way, using only two fingers of his left hand for the purpose, he lit another cirgarette, and leaned back in his chair with a gesture indicating that his right to stay could be disputed by no one. I noticed and watched everything that went on—quite objectively. My mind was clear, my nerves under perfect control, and I was waiting calmly for further developments. For a minute or so nothing happened. Felix stood bending over Eugene Bischoff's body. I could not see his face, but I felt that he was trying to conceal his emotion, unable to hide it any longer behind that mask of unnatural calm he had worn till now. I thought that carried away by his feelings, he would throw himself over Bischoff's body, and that the scene would end with a breakdown on his part. But nothing of the kind happened. He rose and turned a perfectly calm face towards me. I saw now that he had bent down to rearrange the cover, which had been displaced, over Eugene Bischoff's face.

He spoke without a trace of anger or emotion! "We have, unfortunately, only a short time at our disposal. In less than half an hour the police will arrive and I would like to settle our affair before then."

"So would I! And I think we have the necessary witnesses, as both gentlemen were kind enough to stay," I replied, looking at Solgrub.

Dr. Gorsky moved uneasily, but Solgrub had the impudence to nod approvingly at my words.

"Solgrub and Dr. Gorsky are my friends," said Felix, "and I am anxious that they should know all. I shall not keep back anything, not even the fact that four years ago Dina was your mistress!!"

This came as a shock to me, but I pulled myself together and replied almost at once: "When I agreed to hear what you have to say, I knew that you would make an attack on me, but I certainly did not expect that it would be also directed against a woman for whom I have a deep respect. I must ask you to withdraw the expression you have just used——"

"Withdraw it? Why should I, Captain von Yosch? I can assure you that the word expresses Dina's opinion."

"Am I to take it that Dina has authorised you to——"

"Certainly, Captain von Yosch."

"In this case, please go on."

A boyish conceited smile flickered round Felix's lips: he was pleased to have won the first round. But the flicker vanished as quickly as it had appeared, and when he spoke again, it

was in a correct, almost apologetic tone: "Your relations with Dina, the nature of which we are agreed upon, lasted a little less than half a year. They ended when you decided to go to Japan. I say they ended, although no doubt you considered it no more than a temporary break——"

"When I went to Tongking and Cambodia, I went under orders from the Ministry of Agriculture, and not on a pleasure trip," I interrupted, and while correcting him on minor points, I tried to hide my surprise at seeing him so unmoved by the fact that his sister had been my mistress.—What was he driving at, I wondered? A duel? I was there, ready to give him satisfaction—why did he hesitate? What else did he want? A vague creeping fear hung over me, a premonition of unknown evils, threatening dangers I tried in vain to drive from me.

"Well then, Tongking and Cambodia," continued Felix with a gesture of apology. "It is immaterial where your journey took you. The thing is that on your return after a year's absence you found a changed situation: Dina was married and you had become a stranger to her."

. . . . .

Yes, that was what had happened. And while Felix spoke, the old burning ache surged up in me—the anger I had felt at being deceived, and with it came a new sensation—a deep hatred for this boy who dared touch that which I had kept so long in my innermost heart. Did I need to answer? Did I have to stand by while he dragged my secret into the light

for the eyes of strangers to see? It was enough, more than enough! I wanted to grasp him, shake him, end this terrible scene in some way. But fear hung over me, fear of an intangible something which crept closer and closer until I was paralysed and helpless as in a nightmare.

I had to listen to Felix as he continued in a quiet measured way.

"The idea that a woman whom you thought you had fettered to you by indissoluble ties should have freed herself, should have dared to become another's, seemed intolerable to you. You had suffered defeat and were annoyed. Ever since it happened you made it the aim of your life to reconquer Dina. Whatever you did, however meaningless and unimportant it looked, was an effort toward that goal."

He stopped as if to give me a chance to reply, but I remained silent and he went on again: "I have watched you at it, Captain von Yosch. For years I have watched your game with as keen an interest as if the prize were not my sister's happiness but some trophy in the field of sport. I saw you slowly approach; saw how you avoided or took all obstacles; saw you draw closer and closer circles round this house. You contrived to be asked here, and one day you came and stood between Dina and her husband."

The dreaded moment had come, the blow must fall.—I stood with shaking hands. The silence was so oppressive that I could hardly breathe, and it came as a relief to hear Felix speak again: "To-day, I am free to tell you, Captain von

Yosch, that I never felt any doubt as to the outcome of this struggle. You were the stronger, for to conquer was the one and only aim of your life, and nothing else counted beside it. That is why you were invincible. This home was to be broken up because you willed it so."

Again he paused and my fear became unbearable. I looked at Dr. Gorsky.—He stood leaning against the writing table, evidently hopelessly puzzled; I saw that he could not help me. Solgrub sat in his easy-chair, veiled in a cloud of smoke. He was gazing at the tips of his fingers as if bored, and with his thoughts elsewhere. Felix broke the painful silence: "You lost the game after all, Baron. You made one fatal mistake. Do you know what I mean? Dina will never tolerate near her the man who has her husband's death on his conscience."

That was it, then, that was the threat I had felt hanging over me. Put into words it appeared ridiculous, absurd. Confidence, calm returned, for I faced a foe who had aimed and missed. It was my turn now. I felt far above this boy who had dared to pick a quarrel with me. I had the upper hand and I knew how to act. I went up close to him and looked into his eyes: "I hope," I said, "you do not maintain seriously that I or anyone else had a hand in this tragedy."

My words had the effect I expected. Felix could not bear my look and stepped back troubled.

"I am surprised, Captain von Yosch," he replied. "I certainly did not expect that you would deny the part you played in this sad affair. Candidly, I cannot understand

you. Are you not afraid that your denial will be given a wrong interpretation? Before this, I never noticed that you lacked courage."

"We will not discuss my personal courage at this moment," I said, in a tone which could not leave any doubt as to my future intentions. "Will you be so good as to tell me what part I played in this affair, in your opinion."

His embarrassment had been genuine enough, but he was quite calm again now.

"I had hoped that you would save me this," he said. "Since you insist, very well. You found out in some way that my brother-in-law's savings, as well as my sister's small fortune, were entrusted to the Bergstein Bank. This morning's papers brought the news of the Bank's breakdown. You knew that Dina had decided to keep it from her husband as long as possible. You used your knowledge of these facts as a weapon; again and again during the afternoon you tried to turn the conversation on the reported bankruptcy of the Bergstein Bank, and you only desisted because you found Dina and I were watching you. But you waited your opportunity and found it. Need I say more? You followed Eugene when he left us. Here, alone with him at last, with no one to stand between him and you, you told him without mercy, what we had kept from him. And when you left him, what you desired happened: the fatal shot was fired. He fell an easy prey to you, Baron von Yosch. You knew that he had lost all self-confidence, all belief in his future, long ago."

"Two shots were fired," said Solgrub, but none of us took any notice of him.

I felt that it was time to end this scene.

"I suppose that is all you have to say?" I asked.

Felix did not reply.

"You told your sister of your suspicions?"

"I did."

"I must ask you to inform your sister at once that your suspicions were unfounded. I have nothing whatever to do with this affair. I never spoke to Eugene Bischoff after he left us in the music-room, and I never entered the summer-house."

"You never entered—— No, Dina is not here, we took her to my parents. You maintain, Baron, that you never came in here?"

"Upon my word of honour, I did not."

"Your word of honour as an officer?"

"Yes, my word of honour."

"Your word of honour," repeated Felix slowly. He stood before me, slightly bent, nodding his head several times. Then his whole attitude changed. He stretched like a man who has just accomplished a painful laborious task and for a moment a smile played round his lips.

"Your word of honour," he said again. "Of course that simplifies the situation considerably—an officer's word of honour. I must ask you to give me your attention for just one more moment. You see, Baron Yosch, the unknown visitor left something here. Oh, it is not a particularly valuable thing, he may

not even have discovered his loss yet. Look—here it is." He held something brown and shiny in his bandaged hand. I did not see at once what it was—but then I started, horrified, and put my hand into my coat-pocket. It was empty, my short briar was not in its usual place. "I noticed it on the table," said Felix, "when the Doctor and I came in. Look out, Doctor!"

. . . . .

The whole room seemed to turn around me. Darkness enshrouded me, and out of it rose a picture of something that had happened a long, long time ago. I saw myself. I was walking through the garden along the path skirting the fuchsia beds—whither? What did I want in the summer-house? The door creaked as I opened it. How pale Eugene Bischoff turned at my whispered words, how he stared at the newspaper I held out to him, how he started and sank back into his chair with a hunted, desperate look in his eyes! And this look followed me as I left the room, pulling the creaking door carefully to, behind me. There is a light on the veranda—that must be Dina. Up to her quickly—a cry—a shot! And on the lawn stands Death, and it is I who called him, it is I——

"Look out, Doctor, he is falling!"

No, I was not falling. On opening my eyes, I found myself in the easy chair. Felix stood before me.

"This pipe belongs to you, does it not?"

I nodded. The bandaged hand dropped.

I rose.

"You will want to leave, Baron!" said Felix. "Yes, all is settled and I must not detain you any longer. A word of honour, an officer's word of honour, is not one of those things we differ on. And as we shall hardly meet again, I want to assure you that I never felt any hostility towards you—no, not even to-day. On the contrary, you attracted me rather, in a strange way. Sympathy? No, it is not that. It is something else, something more. You see I am my sister's true brother! You may well ask why, feeling as I do, I should have brought you to this pass, from which, as matters stand, there is only one way to escape. But one may well be fascinated by a wild cat, a tiger; one may be charmed by the creature's gracefulness, by the strength and daring it displays and yet shoot it without a moment's hesitation, for after all what is it but a beast of prey! You need not carry out what you have decided to do within the usual twenty-four hours, Baron. If necessary at all, I shall inform your Regimental Court at the end of the week."

. . . . .

I heard every one of Felix's words, yet my thoughts were riveted on the revolver on the table. It stared at me with a large menacing eye; it grew and grew, till it filled the room and I could see nothing else besides it.

. . . . .

"You are wronging Baron Yosch grievously," I heard Solgrub say. "He has no more to do with this murder than either you or I."

CHAPTER IX

I only faintly recollect my sensations as I regained consciousness. The first sound to break the silence which filled the room was the deep sigh I uttered. Then I became aware of a dull, gnawing feeling in my head; not a pain exactly, just a *malaise,* that was soon over. What is it? I asked myself in wonder.What has happened that such insane fancies should be able to get hold of me, that I should seem to see myself entering this room, to hear myself whispering words which never left my lips; to believe myself guilty of murder! How can such weird things happen? Delusions! A strange power, a will beyond my own had forced me for a moment to own to a deed I had not done. I had not been here, had not spoken with Eugene Bischoff, I had not murdered him! A demoniacal, hellish dream had fooled me—and it was over now.

I breathed freely again. I had fought my battle and had won. I had overcome the mysterious power to which I had

succumbed for a moment. *Within me, around me, everything was changed. I stood again in the world of reality.*

On looking up I met Felix's eyes. He still stared at me with the same expression of aversion and hardness. Evidently he was not in a mind to give up his victory, and turned on Solgrub as a new dangerous adversary, shaking his bandaged hand at him.

Solgrub ignored the gesture.

"Be calm, Felix!" he warned him. "I have thought this affair over and I know what I am talking about. I have come to the conclusion that Baron Yosch is innocent. You are wronging him, and all I ask is that you should listen to what I have to say."

His assured, calm way of talking was very soothing to my overwrought nerves. Gone was the feeling of relief and the memory of the fancies that had weighed on my soul but a moment since. That I should be seriously accused of murder appeared to me fantastic and absurd. Now that I saw things again in the clear light of reality, I saw them almost with the detached curiosity of an onlooker. How shall this tangle be unravelled? Who was it that drove Eugene Bischoff to commit suicide? On whose conscience lay the guilt? And my pipe, that mute witness of what happened in this room, how did it come to be here? Whom did it accuse?

That was what I wanted to know. I had to find out, and my eyes instinctively sought Solgrub as if he held the so-

lution to this tangle of mysteries. I could not tell what feelings were uppermost in Felix's mind, whether it was indignation or impatience, annoyance or disappointment. Whichever it was, he knew how to conceal it from us. He looked his usual polite self and turned with an inviting gesture to Solgrub: "Let us hear what you have to say, Waldemar, but please be brief. I believe I can hear the motor of the Commissioner of Police."

He was right: in the distance I could hear the sound of a motor horn. But Solgrub took no notice of it. He began to speak, and at the sound of his voice I remembered with a shudder that my honour, even my life, was at stake. But only for a moment was I uneasy. After all I was secure and safe. I was really out of all this! Surely everything would be fully explained now, and it was preposterous to think that the accusation against me could be upheld any longer.

"You are of course aware, Felix," began Solgrub, "that at the moment the shots fell Baron von Yosch was in the house talking to your sister. This is the point we must start from."

"That may be so," replied Felix, as if a matter of utter indifference were under discussion—he was still listening to the motor horn which grew fainter and fainter.

"We must keep this in mind," repeated Solgrub. "It is important, for I have reason to believe that Eugene's unknown visitor was still in this room when the two shots were fired."

"Two shots?" said Felix, "I only heard one."

"There were two shots, all the same. I haven't examined

the revolver yet, but if you will do so, Felix, you will find I am right."

He pointed to the pale blue flowers on the wallpaper behind the writing table.

"Look! Here is the second ball. He did defend himself, Felix, he fired at his persecutor before he turned the weapon on himself. That is how matters stand. Baron Yosch was upstairs on the veranda when the shots fell. You can see for yourself that in looking for that unknown guest of Eugene's we must leave the Baron out of the reckoning."

Dr. Gorsky, bending over the hole in the wall, tried to locate the ball with his penknife. I could hear the soft noise of the breaking plaster. Felix was still listening towards the street. "Are you sure of that?" he asked after a while without turning his head. "Can you tell me how this unknown person got into the garden? Nobody saw him, nobody heard the bell. I know what your answer will be: that he had a second key to the garden door, your 'Great Unknown!' Am I right, Waldemar?"

Solgrub shook his head. "No, I am inclined to think that he was here waiting for Eugene Bischoff—maybe for many hours."

"Oh! Then how can you explain his disappearance? You say he was in here when the first shot fell. There was no more than a moment's interval between the two shots, and when we arrived the door was bolted from within."

Solgrub replied, perfectly untroubled: "Yes, I thought of

that myself. And the windows too, were closed. I acknowledge that this is the one weak point in my conclusions—so far it is only the fact which you have against Baron Yosch."

"The only one!" cried Felix. "And the pipe? Who do you think brought his briar here? Perhaps your mysterious visitor did? Or Eugene himself?"

"I should certainly not exclude the second possibility," remarked Solgrub.

Before Felix could reply, Dr. Gorsky broke in: "I may be mistaken, of course—I would hardly like to say—but it seems to me—I think I recall seeing the pipe in Bischoff's hand."

Felix interrupted him: "Really, Doctor? Whenever did you see Eugene smoke? No, Doctor. My brother-in-law never smoked, he hated the very smell of tobacco!"

"But I did not say that he meant to smoke the pipe, Felix! I have sometimes gone into the streets with a pair of large paper scissors in my hand without knowing it, and had I not met with some friends——"

"No, Doctor, you will have to find a better explanation. When I came into the room the pipe was still lit, and look! you can see some burnt matches on the floor over there."

Doctor Gorsky had no reply to this, but Felix's words affected Solgrub in a way that can hardly be described. He turned an ashen grey, stared at us in turn and cried: "That is it; the pipe was still lit! You remember, Felix? His cigarette lay on the writing table, still aglow!"

None of us guessed the trend of his thoughts. I noticed that in his excitement he spoke with a strong Slavonic accent. We were surprised to see him so pale and shaken—almost incapable of expressing himself coherently—stammering, furious, so that we could not follow his words.

Felix shook his head, perplexed.

"Waldemar, you must make things clearer. I have not understood a word of what you have said."

"And I was the first to enter this room!" cried Solgrub. "Hell! Where were my eyes? Make things clear to you! Aren't they clear enough? He, too, locked himself in his room, just as Eugene Bischoff did, and when the landlady broke the door open, his lighted cigarette lay on the desk. Don't you understand, Felix, or don't you want to?"

At last I saw what he was talking about. I had not thought again of the mysterious suicide of that young naval officer, Bischoff's friend. With a shudder I realised the similarity of the circumstances in both tragic events, and the probable connection between them dawned upon me.

"The same circumstances and the same end," said Solgrub, passing his hand over his forehead. "Almost identically—the same preliminaries in every one of the three cases, and in all of them the apparent lack of a motive for the fatal deed."

"And your conclusions?" asked Felix, much perplexed and, I could see, not quite so sure of his case.

"First, that Baron Yosch is certainly innocent. You must see that now yourself, Felix?"

"And who is the guilty one?"

Solgrub looked wistfully at the covered body at his feet. For some unexplained reason he lowered his voice almost to a whisper as he replied: "Perhaps he was on the verge of solving the mystery of his friend's suicide when he told us of it. He came very near knowing when he left the room. Don't you remember how excited he was? Almost beside himself."

"Well, go on!"

"That young officer chose to die when he had found the reason for his brother's suicide. Eugene, too, had guessed it—perhaps that is why he had to die——"

The bell of the garden door rang, and broke the silence which followed Solgrub's last words. Dr. Gorsky left to open the door. We heard voices.

Felix, too, looked up. The expression on his face had changed entirely: he had regained his cool composure.

"The Commissioner of Police," he said. Then turning to Solgrub: "You are evidently not aware in what phantasies you are losing yourself. No, my friend, your theories are not convincing. I must ask you to excuse me. I wish to talk privately to the police."

He shook Dr. Gorsky's hand. "Good night, Doctor. I shall never forget all you have done for Dina and me to-day. Where should we have been without you? You kept your head, you thought of everything, Doctor."

He glanced at me.

"Of course, Captain von Yosch, nothing has changed as far as our affair is concerned. I suppose you agree that our arrangement stands?"

I bowed silently.

CHAPTER X

Nothing else of much importance happened that evening at the Villa Bischoff. As we walked back to the house, through the garden, we met three men, one of them carrying a large attaché case. It was the Commissioner of Police with his attendants. The deaf old gardener walked in front of them, lighting the way with his lantern. We stepped aside to let them pass and one of them, an elderly man with a full round face and a small pointed beard, stopped to talk to Dr. Gorsky. He was the Police Surgeon of the District.

"Evening, Doctor," I heard him say, and he covered his mouth with his handkerchief. "Somewhat damp and chilly for the time of year. Were you called in?"

"No. I happened to be here by chance."

"What has happened? We know nothing so far."

"I would rather you drew your own conclusions," Dr. Gorsky replied. I did not hear the rest of their conversation, as I continued on my way towards the house.

. . . . .

The music-room looked just as I had left it. The chair, which had been knocked over, still lay across the door; my music was scattered all over the floor, and Dina's shawl hung over the back of the chair where she had thrown it. The chilly night air came in through the open windows, and, shivering, I buttoned up my coat. As I bent down to collect my music, my eyes fell on one of the leaves marked: "Trio in B major, Op. 8." And it was as if we had only just finished playing the scherzo. The final chords of the piano and the long drawn last note of the 'cello sounded in my ears; a friendly vision revealed us, just as we were sitting round the tea table. Nothing had happened. Solgrub blew his eternal smoke rings and, from where Dina sat at the piano, I heard her take a deep breath, while Bischoff paced the room slowly, and I watched his shadow gliding over the carpet. Somewhere in the house a door closed with a bang and startled me. Loud voices came from the hall and I heard my name. It was the doctor who was talking with Solgrub about me. No doubt they thought that I had left the house long ago.

"Anything," I heard Dr. Gorsky say. "Violence, treachery! Good God! Ten o'clock already! Murder if you like—it would not be the first one. But untrue to his word of honour? No never!"

"Not his first murder?" asked Solgrub.

"What do you mean?"

"Why, he is a cavalry officer. Do you expect me to give you my ideas on duelling in this draught? I know only too well

how brutal he can be. There is your coat, Solgrub. He loves animals, a dog, a horse, yes. But for a man who stands in his way? I tell you he doesn't care a hang."

"I think you are misjudging Baron Yosch, Doctor. My impression——"

"Listen, I have known that man—let's see—I have known him for fifteen years——"

"But I, too, have some understanding of character, and he certainly did not give me the impression of being a brutal man—on the contrary, he seems fundamentally, a very sensitive, shy being, living in his music."

"My dear Solgrub, can you define any of us so simply and easily? You cannot sum up the character of a man in a few phrases. Human beings are not quite such simple things as your green wire bobbins, loaded either with positive or negative electricity. Sensitive, you say. Certainly, he may be that —and shy, too, but there is room for a great many things besides that."

I stood still, a sheet of music in my hand. The door was ajar and a movement might have disclosed my presence. I was not in the least interested in their discussion, and I only wished that they would leave quickly, for it embarrassed me to have to play the eavesdropper. But they continued the conversation, and I had to listen, whether I liked it or not.

"But not a false word of honour, not that," said the Doctor again. "You see, there are ethical laws not even a cynic will

break. Class, descent, tradition do tell. No! Baron Yosch's word cannot be doubted. In this Felix is quite wrong."

"Yes, Felix is mistaken. I saw that at once. We have found a clue, and instead of following it up—from where we first found it, instead of doing the most obvious thing, we—— Surely Felix ought to ask himself what Baron Yosch could possibly have to do with that young art student's suicide. I can hardly believe it yet, that Eugene Bischoff is dead! We must clear this affair up, Doctor, we must. Will you help me?"

"Help you? What can we do, Solgrub, but let matters take their course?"

"What? Let matters take their own course?" shouted Solgrub. "No, Doctor, I never did that in all my life. Let matters take their own course is another way of saying: 'I am too lazy, too stupid, too heartless'."

"Thank you," said Dr. Gorsky. "You are certainly an expert in reading character."

"Perhaps I am, Doctor. You think that Baron Yosch is a heartless brute, a man without restraint or conscience—do believe me, he is nothing of the kind: he reminds me of our Russian borzojs; do you know the race? Slender, finely built, haughty creatures, not very active mentally, but aristocrats through and through. They look as if it were well to beware of them—and yet, let them face death and they are utterly helpless. We must think for him, Doctor. Would you really leave him to his fate? If 'things take their course' they are bound to turn against him, and the end will be a pistol shot.

Do think of it, Doctor. Are there not enough victims already?"

Dr. Gorsky did not reply. I heard him rummage about, something heavy came crashing to the floor, followed by angry grumblings ending with an oath.

"What are you looking for?" asked Solgrub.

"My stick. Where on earth can I have left it? And it is not my stick at all, that is the worst of it; it belongs to my porter. That damned rheumatism! I ought to have gone to take the waters long ago. It is a heavy brown stick with a horn crook; haven't you seen it somewhere?"

I started; the lost stick was leaning against the wall next to me.

I had hoped that Solgrub and the Doctor would leave the house without finding that I was still there. In vain, as I saw now. Dr. Gorsky was sure to look for his stick in the music-room. I threw my music on the nearest table and, stepping to the piano, I slammed the lid of the violin case down, to let those two in the hall know that I was there and had heard every word they had said.

Dr. Gorsky's grumbling stopped suddenly. There was no sound but the soft tic-tac of the clock on the mantelshelf. I pictured them out there, looking at each other aghast. I could imagine the embarrassed, startled expression on Solgrub's face. I pictured to myself the Doctor looking like the stone image of a dwarf, in his heavy overcoat. At last they seemed to have found the power of speech again. I heard excited whis-

perings, and then the energetic steps of Solgrub crossing the hall.

I went calmly to meet him, for the situation in which we found ourselves was much more embarrassing for him than for me. Before I could reach the door, the telephone bell rang.

. . . . .

Mechanically I reached for the receiver. Not until I held it to my ear did I remember that the call could not possibly be for me.

"Hullo?"

"Who is speaking?"I knew the voice; I felt certain that I was speaking to a young woman, and somehow her voice brought the memory of strange perfumes, of ether or etheric oils. I wondered where I had heard this voice before.

The lady at the other end grew impatient.

"Who is speaking?" she repeated, clearly irritated. I was embarrassed to notice Solgrub at that moment. He stood in the door, hat in hand, and looked questioningly at me.

"Villa Bischoff," I said at last.

"Oh, there is my stick," mumbled Dr. Gorsky. He had pushed his way past Solgrub and stood in the middle of the room rubbing his leg.

"Is the Professor in?" I heard from the voice over the telephone. I had not the vaguest idea whom she might mean. "Wrong connection," I thought.I recalled that Dina had complained that their number was often confused with that of a famous ophthalmic surgeon.

"Oh! again," moaned the doctor."A few weeks at a sulphur Spa is what I need. But would you believe it, I could not spare even that much time for myself this summer."

"Whom do you want?" I asked.

"Professor Bischoff—Eugene Bischoff."

Strange that I did not think of it before. Bischoff was a Professor at the Academy of Dramatic Art: very likely one of his pupils wanted him on the telephone. But why should her voice be associated in my mind with the scent of ether?

"The Professor is not at home," I said.

"Do come along," urged the Doctor. "How much longer do you propose to keep me waiting in this draught, and with a bad bout of rheumatism, too!"

"Oh, be quiet," whispered Solgrub. "The umbrella stand bruised your shin when you knocked it over just now, that's what your so-called rheumatic pain comes from."

"Nonsense! Who is to know what muscular pains are if I don't?"

"Not at home, not even for me?" came the voice over the telephone.

She apparently thought it unnecessary to give her name. "Not at home for me? He is expecting my call!"

I did not know what to do, and Dr. Gorsky's constant interruptions added to my confusion. What could I tell her?

"I am afraid Professor Bischoff is unable to speak to anybody to-day." And as I spoke I thought of the tartan rug and

the pale face it covered—a cold shudder passed down my spine and my hands were trembling.

"He cannot speak to anyone?" The lady sounded surprised, incredulous. "But I tell you he is expecting my call!"

"Just look out, Solgrub," said the Doctor. "I am afraid it is raining again. This kind of weather is poison for me. And you may be sure it will be impossible to find a taxi."

"For God's sake shut up, Doctor," shouted Solgrub.

"What does this mean? Some disaster!" cried the girl at the other end of the telephone.

"My back begins to ache, too," said the Doctor in a low voice, and stopped abashed.

"What has happened, do tell me what has happened," urged the voice on the telephone.

"Nothing has happened, nothing at all." How does she know? I wondered—how did she find out? No, no one must hear it from me, nobody but Felix has the right to—— "Nothing has happened," I repeated, and tried to speak calmly, but those broken eyes in the pale face would not leave me.

"Professor Bischoff has retired to work, that is all," I added.

"He is working! Of course, the new part—and I thought—no!—what a stupid idea! I was afraid——"

I heard a soft laugh. Then she continued in her former confident way: "Of course I do not wish to disturb the Professor. May I ask to whom I am speaking?"

"Baron Yosch."

"I do not remember having met you," came the reply, and

again I thought that I had heard her voice more than once before, but when and where——?

"I expected Professor Bischoff this afternoon, but about noon he called up to tell me that he was prevented from coming. Will you please tell him that I shall wait for him up till eleven o'clock to-morrow-morning, that everything is prepared and that I am not in a mood to postpone this matter again."

"And from whom am I to give this message to Professor Bischoff?"

"Tell him," she said, and her voice sounded pettish, like the voice of a spoilt child, "tell him that I will, under no circumstances, wait any longer for the Day of Judgment."

"The Day of Judgment!" I asked surprised, uneasy without quite knowing why.

"Yes! The Day of Judgment. Please will you tell Professor Bischoff so. Thank you." She rang off and I dropped the receiver. At the same moment I felt someone grip my shoulder. I turned my head—Solgrub stood at my side staring at my face.

"What—what did you say," he stammered.

"I? A lady on the telephone—she does not want to wait any longer for the Day of Judgment."

He released my shoulder and snatched up the receiver. His hat had dropped to the floor; I picked it up and held it in my hand.

"Too late," I said, "she has rung off."

He threw the receiver down violently.

"To whom did you speak?" he snapped at me.

"To whom? I don't know, she would not give me her name, but her voice seemed familiar. That is all I can tell you."

"Think, man! For God's sake think! I must know with whom you have spoken. You must remember. Do you hear? You must!"

I shrugged my shoulders.

"If you wish it, I will call up the exchange, perhaps they can tell me with whom I was connected."

"That is no use whatsoever, you can save yourself that trouble. Better try to remember. She asked for Eugene Bischoff. What was it she wanted?"

I repeated the conversation word for word. "You, too, think this is a strange message to give, don't you, Solgrub?" I asked. "The Day of Judgment! What can it mean?"

"I do not know what it may mean, but I do know those were Eugene Bischoff's last words."

. . . . .

We kept silent for a while. Not a sound but the ticking of the clock broke the stillness till Dr. Gorsky, who had been looking into the garden, slammed the window.

"Thank God!" he said, "the rain has stopped."

"Damn the rain, Doctor!" shouted Solgrub heatedly. "Don't you see that a life is at stake?"

"You really worry unnecessarily about me," I said reassuringly. "I am not quite as helpless as you think, besides——"

He stared blankly at me, then, noticing his hat in my hand, he took it from me.

"It is not your life that is in danger," he whispered. "No, not yours."

He turned to go. Without a word, without taking any notice of the doctor or me, he went downstairs like a man walking in his sleep, his battered hat dangling from his hand.

CHAPTER XI

To people whom I met on my way home that evening, rushing along excitedly, hatless, pale, a fresh cut across my brow, I must have appeared as one deranged. I have never found out how and when I came by that wound. Most likely when I fainted in the summer-house I fell against a chair or the corner of the writing-desk. I remember that soon after I felt a sharp pain over my right eye, but it did not last and I paid no more attention to it. Unaware of the bleeding wound I misinterpreted the surprised looks of passers-by and gave way to a strange fancy.

I imagined that the whole town knew of the tragedy that had occurred that afternoon at Bischoff's Villa. The town was aroused, so everyone I met knew me and took me to be the murderer. "How is it you are not arrested yet?" the look of a student leaving a café seemed to ask. Seized with a fear I hurried along, almost running into two girls who stood waiting in front of a door. I noticed that one of them, the one with a sprig of holly in her hand, recognised me. "There he is," she

whispered, and turned away horrified. She was a pale-faced young girl and her red hair gleamed under the brim of her hat as the light of the street lamp fell upon it.

An old gentleman came along. His hands moved nervously and he stopped as if he wished to address me. He looked sorrowfully at me: "How could you drive that poor man to death! How could you do it?" he seemed to want to say. Damn it, I have had enough of this! And as if he had guessed my thoughts, and had become frightened lest at his first word I should knock him down, he turned and hurried away.

But what happened next made me lose my nerve completely. A cyclist rode silently up to me, a tall, muscular man with bare arms and a brutal face. He looked like a baker's journeyman in his sleeveless shirt. He jumped off his wheel in front of me and stared into my face. "He is after you, he wants to catch you!" I thought and began to run across the road and down the first dark street, on and on far out of my way home. At last I stopped, breathless and exhausted, and came to my senses. "What is the matter with me?" I asked myself scared and ashamed. "Why do I run away? Surely the whole town cannot be in a ferment because over there, in the Villa Bischoff, lies a man who has turned a deadly weapon on himself." What folly to read in the eyes of people, strangers met by chance, the wild accusations of Felix. Mad fancies! People I do not know and have never seen before!—"Enough of this nonsense!" I muttered angrily. "Get home and take some bromide: your nerves are on edge."

After all, what had I to fear? I was not to blame. I could not have prevented what happened, nobody could. Why should I not go my way in peace?

. . . . .

And yet—I could not help it. Something forced me to shun people. I avoided the light of street-lamps and crept along in the shadow of the houses. Every approaching footstep made me jump. I heard a cab coming round a dark corner and hailed it. A tired-looking, sleepy driver took me home at last.

By the time I had opened the door of my flat my mind was made up. I would go away. "I have reached the breaking point," I said, as I went into the sitting-room. "Breaking point, breaking point," I went on, till catching myself at it I stopped, frightened. Yes, away from here, but not to the south, not to Nice or Rapallo or the Lido. I owned a country seat near Chrudim, in Bohemia, which had come to me through a cousin on my mother's side. I had passed many years of my childhood in the old place, and the steward's reports brought back pleasant memories of far-off summer days. Since then I had gone up only once for a week's shooting. That was five years ago.

It was there I would go; there I would find the peace and solitude I needed more than ever before. For the moment I forgot that my disappearance might easily be misinterpreted; that it might be thought a proof of my guilt, a desperate effort to escape facing the evidence that was accumulating against

me. My only thought was: Away! And I pictured the weeks that were to follow—how I would wander for hours through my pine woods, up and down the hills, my shaggy old spaniel at my heels. I would revisit the pool in which as a boy I had fished for sea-monsters and caught water-bugs and salamanders and leeches. On a Sunday afternoon I would sit for a while in the village inn amongst the taciturn old Czech peasantry and watch the rangers and foresters at their game of cards. And then in the evenings I would sit over my fire! The logs would crackle in the large grate. I would rest in my comfortable armchair, with my pipe and a book, a glass of old port on the table. . . .

That is how I imagined life for the next few weeks. I had made my plans and I was burning to see them materialise. Now that I had decided to go, I wished I already might be in the train. I hated the very sight of my room, the writing table and the old Gobelin-curtains, the Albanian gun and the green silk prayer-rug that hung on the wall. Oh! how I hated and loathed it all!

I could not bear to wait. I had to do something to confirm me in my resolution, to bring me nearer to my goal. In feverish haste I brought my trunks from their corner and began to pack. In spite of my excitement, I thought of everything that was needed and worked methodically. Vincent, my valet, could not have done better. I forgot nothing, not even the compass and the German-Czech dictionary I had used on my journey to Chudrim five years ago. When I had finished, the room was

littered with books, papers, clothes and shoes which had to remain behind. I locked the trunks and sat down to think what more I had to do before leaving town. Of course the first thing would be to get money at my bank in the morning. Then I must see my solicitor. My leave had not yet expired. A note had to be sent to friends with whom I had arranged to dine at the Restaurant de l'Opera on Wednesday night, and a wire to my steward to meet the train with the trap. There were some small bills outstanding, and a debt at cards. I must not forget to settle these. I wanted to leave my affairs in order. What else was there? Yes, I had promised to take part in the forthcoming Count Wenkheim fencing contest. I had to cancel that engagement, but a few words to the secretary of the club would suffice.

I could not remember anything else for the moment. I placed the memorandum relating to these things under the paper weight on my writing table. All that could be done at that time of night was done and I felt more calm. Five past two—time I went to bed! But I was still far too restless to find sleep. My overwrought brain refused to rest. As I lay with closed eyes, picture followed picture in my mind. I remembered that I had two veronal tabloids left in the bottle on my night-table and took them. I would need veronal, or bromide or morphia for the next few days, that was clear. Better get some to-morrow. Wherever was the prescription? I jumped out of bed again, and began to look for it. I searched my pocket book, went through the drawers of my desk, turned

out the drawers of my dressing table, the pockets of my coat. In vain, the prescription had disappeared.

Never mind! I soothed myself. I shall not need a prescription for the chemist across the road. They know me there—the owner passes the time of day whenever he meets me. He is sure to give me some bromide without a doctor's prescription. I must have some with me or I shall not get a wink of sleep on the way. I fetched the paper from the writing table and added the word bromide to my notes. As I wrote it down I seemed to hear again the voice of the woman with whom I had spoken on the telephone some hours before, the woman who did not want to wait any longer for the Day of Judgment. Where was the connection? How weird her remark was!—and Solgrub's entreaty: "Do think, man! For God's sake, do think! You must remember!" Yes, I must remember. I had time now; all was quiet; I must try now to find out how it came about that I knew that woman's voice. It was evident that this unknown woman held the key to the secret. She could tell us why Eugene Bischoff had fled—she knew, and I had to find her, had to ask her. I lay searching my brain, trying to recall her voice. In vain! I felt quite numb and tired: the drug was taking effect. A feeling of peace and blissfulness descended upon me, and all that had happened during the day seemed unreal, like a play of shadows. I was still awake, but sleep had brushed my eyes. Stray, senseless words passed through my mind, heralds of a coming dream. . . . "It is still raining," I heard a voice say, and other voices mingled with it.

I started, and found myself alone. A fly was humming, a man passed in the street, tapping the pavement with his stick. I could hear it clearly, yet at the same moment it seemed to be a woodpecker hammering in the distance. The wind was sighing in the pines, a cool damp breeze stroked my face soothingly, far, far away a bird was calling. Once more I tried to open my eyes, and then darkness fell. The day was at an end.

CHAPTER XII

As I awoke I saw Vincent standing at the side of my bed. The room was dark and I could only just discern the outline of the man and the faint glitter of the silver milk jug on the breakfast tray he was carrying. I heard him say something, but did not grasp his meaning. A vague fear of what the day might bring made me wish to sleep on, to fight against being roused.

"What is the time?" I asked and fell asleep once more. But I could not have slept more than a few moments longer, for when I opened my eyes again Vincent was still standing there, the tray in his hands.

"Past nine o'clock, sir."

"Impossible, Vincent!" I replied. "Why, it is pitch dark."

I heard the breakfast things rattle, and Vincent's shuffling steps. He raised the blinds and the light poured into the room, hurting my eyes. "It is high time you got up, sir, if you intend to go away," came Vincent's voice from the window.

"Go away, where to? Why?" I asked drowsily. I tried to think but all I could remember was that I had packed two trunks overnight. "I have plenty of time. You will take the luggage to the station."

"The Southern station, sir?"

It took me some time to recall where I intended to go.

"No. I am going to Chudrim," I said. "Draw the blinds, I want to sleep a little longer."

Vincent came to my bed. "Jesus Maria!" he exclaimed. "What has happened to you, sir?"

I was still drowsy and angry at being disturbed.

"What on earth is the matter now?" I asked, sitting up.

"Just over your right eye, sir! How did it happen?"

"Let me see," I said, and looked into the mirror Vincent brought me.

I was surprised to see the cut, caked with blood, on my forehead. How had it happened?

"The stairs were dark, and I stumbled when I came home," I told Vincent, to avoid further questions. "Go now, and let me sleep."

"And what am I to tell the gentleman? He is waiting for a reply and says the matter is urgent."

"What gentleman?"

"I told you, sir, a gentleman is waiting in the sitting-room. I do not know him. He has never been here before—a tall fair-haired man. He says he must see you, sir. He has settled at your writing table as if he were at home."

"Did he tell you his name?"

"His card is on the tray, sir."

I looked at the card. Waldemar Solgrub, I read. Waldemar Solgrub—Waldemar Solgrub, I repeated, and slowly all that had happened yesterday came back to my mind. I was uneasy. Why did Solgrub call on me at so early an hour? His visit foreboded no good. I wondered whether it would not be best to excuse myself on the grounds of illness. I did not want to see anybody—I longed to be alone.

But I thought better of it.

"I shall have breakfast later," I told Vincent. "Ask the gentleman to wait, I shall not be long."

. . . . .

I found Solgrub at my writing table. He looked tired and weary. The ash tray was full of cigarette ends; he must have been smoking incessantly while waiting for me. His head was resting on his hands; he stared in front of himself with a queer glassy look and his face was drawn as in pain. But his expression changed as soon as he saw me. He came towards me, a look of expectation in his eyes.

"I hope you will forgive me for interrupting your sleep, but I really dared not wait any longer," he said.

"On the contrary," I replied, "I am glad you did. I overslept myself—a thing which rarely happens to me. Will you have a cup of tea?"

"Thank you, no tea for me; a little brandy if I may. Thank you, that will do. You know why I came, Baron?"

"I suppose you come from Felix? Anything new since yesterday?"

"Nothing—nothing so far," he mumbled, almost inaudibly, and the glassy look came back into his eyes.

"In that case, I cannot see——"

"I am afraid I come in vain," he said. He sat bent, and stared past me with a vacant expression. "I somehow imagined that you would be able to tell me who it was you talked to about Eugene Bischoff on the telephone. You remember! Have you no notion who the lady might be?"

"Yes, I have thought about it," I replied, and as I spoke I suddenly came to the conclusion that there was only one possibility. The woman I talked to must be an actress, and I knew her from the stage, for otherwise Bischoff and I had very few acquaintances in common. But when I had seen her or in what play I could not recall.

"Thank you," said Solgrub, and stared absent-mindedly at the green prayer rug on the wall opposite.

"I think I will remember her name," I continued, "but you must give me time. I have not many people to choose from. I have not been to the theatre often lately."

Solgrub sat listlessly in front of me, his head resting on his hand. The silence was oppressive.

"If we could meet this afternoon," I suggested. "Say five o'clock? You must give me that much time—I am sure by then——"

"Don't trouble," he said and poured himself out another

glass of brandy. He drank it and poured out another and yet another. He drank like a madman.

"At five o'clock this afternoon?" he said, after the fifth or sixth glass. "At five, Baron, I shall know in any case to whom you were speaking. As matters stand there cannot be any doubt about it."

"Really?" I exclaimed, surprised and rather doubtful. "Have you any clues? Candidly, I cannot imagine how——"

"I know what I am talking about," Solgrub went on, "you may be sure of that." And he poured down several more glasses of brandy. It looked as if he were used to taking brandy by the tumblerful.

"Of course it's of great importance that we should know who the lady is. We will have to ask her some questions don't you think so, Solgrub? First of all——"

He shook his head.

"I don't think that she will give us any information," he said and fell back into his brooding silence.

We sat a while, facing each other mutely. In my bedroom as was his habit, Vincent talked softly to himself. Sometimes he broke into whistling a bar or two of an old Styrian soldier's song. The noise of the street came faintly through the open windows; a passing lorry shook the tray and made the glasses and milk jug tinkle. The paper with my notes on it fluttered from the table. I picked it up and put it in my pocket.

Solgrub got up. He walked up and down the room several times with heavy but energetic steps, and at last came to a

halt in front of my trunks. "Well that is settled," he said in a changed tone. "Sorry I disturbed you. It was really unnecessary. I see you intend to go away?"

"Yes, I am going to Bohemia; I have a small country house near Chudrim. Another brandy? My train leaves at seven."

"May I ask what calls you away so suddenly?"

"Stags that want shooting, that is all."

"Do you think the stags in your woods would be very hurt if they had to wait a few days longer? But joking apart, Baron, won't you postpone your journey for a few days?"

"I do not see any reason why I should."

"Don't flare up like that," said Solgrub, looking me steadily in the face. "Let me talk frankly. I went to the racing club last night and talked with some of your friends. You happened to be the subject of a pretty lively discussion. I was mistaken, you are not what I took you to be at first; you are not a *bel-esprit*, not an æsthetic—you were spoken of in a tone of strange but respectful hatred. I heard that in some of the affairs you had, you were—well, shall we say—somewhat large in the choice of your means. Somebody called you '*Une canaille superbe.*' No, don't jump up! *Relato refero*—I have no intention of offending you. You are leaving town to shoot stags. Very well. I understand. But why? You are not guilty of Eugene Bischoff's death; it is impossible that you should be. If only half of what I heard about you yesterday is true, I cannot for the life of me understand why you should not in

this case defend yourself as you did in all others. Why should you submit meekly to my friend Felix's orders?"

"And I, Mr. Solgrub, cannot understand what my little hunting expedition has to do with all this—what it has to do with Felix."

"Why play hide-and-seek with me?" asked Solgrub. "Why should you? Don't deceive yourself: not one of your friends but will acknowledge your gift for effective stage management even if the newspaper reports of your 'hunting accident' should omit to draw attention to this particular talent of yours."

I did not understand at once, but when I did, I rose to end the conversation. I had no intention of discussing that affair with him. Solgrub, too, got up. His burning flickering eyes, the deep colour of his cheeks, the restless movements of his hands showed me that the alcohol he had consumed had begun to take effect.

"It is always awkward to meddle in other people's affairs," he said. "Yet let me suggest, Baron, that you postpone your journey for two days. I quite understand the situation which has been forced upon you. But supposing I were to tell you and Felix within forty-eight hours who has committed this murder?"

What he said did not impress me: I did not take him seriously, but rather saw in his cocksure way of talking a sign of intoxication. His arrogance irritated me, and I was on the point of making a brusque reply, when it dawned on me that he might have come across some fact I had overlooked the

day before. I could not say why, but now I felt almost certain that he knew a good deal more than I did. It was easily possible that he had found a clue in the summer-house which led him to believe that he was on the track of him or her, whom he persisted in calling the assassin.

"Fingermarks?" I asked.

"No, there were no fingermarks; nothing of the kind. Listen, Baron, the assassin did not come near the place at all. Eugene Bischoff was alone in the summer-house all the time."

"But you said yesterday——"

"Yes, I know—but I was mistaken. Nobody was near him. He was under the influence of another's will when he fired those two shots—that is how I see it now. The assassin was not near Bischoff at the time, neither was he there before, for I know that whoever killed our friend has not for years stirred from his home."

"Who?" I asked surprised.

"The assassin."

"You know him then?"

"No, I do not know him. But I have good reason to believe that he is an Italian who hardly understands a word of German. And also, as I told you just now, that for years he has not left his home."

"And how do you come to know all this?"

Solgrub ignored my question. "He is a monster, a man of enormous proportions, pathologically fat, and therefore doomed to remain absolutely inactive. That is what the assas-

sin is like. And strangely enough this repulsive creature has some mysterious fascination for artists. One of them was a painter, the other an actor—don't you think this is remarkable?"

"But how have you found out that the assassin is such a monster?"

"A monster, a freak," repeated Solgrub. "You ask how I know it? You think me a marvel of perspicacity, Baron. But to tell the truth, I learnt it by a mere fluke, just a stroke of luck in my investigations."

He stopped and examined the carvings on the chair near my writing table.

"You see, Mr. Loewenfeldt happened to have overheard a conversation Bischoff had on the telephone with a lady. He spoke from the Manager's Office at the Theatre. Perhaps it was the same woman who called up yesterday. You know Loewenfeldt?"

"The Director's secretary?"

"Secretary or dramatist or producer—I don't know exactly what his position is. I met him this morning and he told me—wait a moment!" He pulled a crumpled tram-ticket from his pocket and looked at some notes he had made on the back of it. "Mr. Loewenfeldt remembered the conversation clearly. Listen, Baron, what Bischoff said: 'Bring him along? Impossible, my dear lady! Your dainty furniture is not made to carry such weights. And consider, there is no lift in his house—how am I to get him downstairs?' That is all; he finished

with the usual phrases with which one ends a conversation over the telephone."

Solgrub folded his paper carefully and looked at me questioningly.

"Well," he asked, "what do you make of it all?"

"I think it is rather risky to draw such far-reaching conclusions from a few detached words. How can you be sure he was talking about the assassin?"

"Of whom else could he have spoken!" exclaimed Solgrub. "I am quite sure that the man who cannot leave the house because there is no lift is the assassin we are looking for. I can picture him: a monster of huge proportions, possibly paralysed—do you think it would be very difficult to trace him?"

Walking about the room, he began to develop his plans.

"One way would be to inquire at the Medical Association. A case like this must be known to them. People of this type are usually suffering from some cardiac disease, so that I might learn something from a heart specialist. That he is an Italian who hardly speaks any German, reduces the number of people who might come in question. But I hope I shall be able to save myself all this trouble, and that it will be possible to find the assassin in a far simpler way. What puzzles me most is the attraction this man must have had for Eugene Bischoff. Had he a liking for monstrosities, for freaks, for nature in her cruel moods?"

"You know that the assassin is an Italian?" I asked.

"It would be too much to say that I know it. It is just an

idea I have. You will probably say again: 'a risky conclusion to come to.' Never mind. I shall try to explain why I think that assassin must be an Italian. Afterwards you may say whatever you like."

He dropped into a chair, and closed his eyes, resting his chin on his crossed hands.

"I must go back to the premises of the case," he began. "You remember that the young officer, whose story Eugene Bischoff told us, was searching for his brother's assassin. We know how it all ended. One day he returned unusually late for lunch. An hour later he killed himself. It was the day on which he had found the assassin and had spoken to him. You know that this is so?"

"Certainly."

"Eugene Bischoff, too, came home very late during the last few days. It happened the first time on Wednesday, the second time on Friday. He had taken a motor, for at lunch he mentioned that he had had some trouble when his car had collided with a tram in Burg Street. He thought that he would be called as a witness by the police. On Saturday he was late again—he was absent-minded and silent, and Dina surmised that the rehearsal had been prolonged beyond the usual hour. I have ascertained to-day that this was not the case. You can see that the circumstances are identical in both cases. There is only one difference I can see, a very important one though. You see what I mean, Baron?"

"No!"

"Strange that you should not see it. The assassin had a strong suggestive influence on his victims. The young naval officer succumbed to it the very first time he met him. It took him three days to force his will upon Bischoff. What may be the cause of this? Actors in general are easily influenced, but from an officer one would expect a stronger resistance. The more I think about it, the more certain do I feel that there is only one explanation: the assassin speaks in a language which the young officer understood perfectly well, while Bischoff spoke it with difficulty. It must be Italian, for Italian is the only foreign tongue of which Bischoff had a smattering. You may say this is only a hypothesis, and I admit, Baron, a very bold one at that, but——"

"You may be right for all that," I said, for I remembered Engene Bischoff's love for Italy and everything Italian. "Your arguments are logical—you have almost convinced me."

Solgrub smiled, evidently pleased that his conclusions were acceptable to me.

"I should never have puzzled this out myself," I owned; "I admire your reasoning and power of penetration. I do not doubt any longer that sooner or later you will find out who the lady is to whom I talked on the telephone yesterday."

The smile left his lips.

"I am afraid, Baron, that will not need much penetration," lifting his hands, and dropping them again as if in despair—I could not understand this sudden change of mood.

Lost in thought, Solgrub took a cigarette from his case but forgot to light it.

"Look here, Baron," he said, after a long pause, "while I sat here waiting for you—it will be rather difficult to make you see the association—anyhow while I sat there my thoughts were naturally dwelling on that unknown woman and her curious words about the Day of Judgment—I cannot tell you why, but suddenly I saw those five hundred dead men of the Munho river."

He stared vacantly at the cigarette in his hand.

"Or rather, I did not see them," he continued, "I only tried to picture them—something seemed to force me to think what it would be like if those five hundred stood before me, side by side, five hundred distorted, yellow faces with the fear of death written on them, accusing——"

He tried to light a match, but it broke in his trembling fingers.

"Of course, it is a childish thought," he went on. "It is a shadow of the past for us, this word of the Day of Judgment. The throne of Judgment of the Almighty! What do you feel at the sound of these words? Your ancestors—they might have fallen on their knees in mad fear at the sound of the *Dies irae*."

"The Yosch——" he suddenly spoke in a light conversational tone as if dealing with an interesting but unimportant subject. "The Yosch hail from the Catholic part of the Pfalz-Neuburg, don't they? You are surprised that I am so well in-

formed about your family? You must not think that I am generally interested in the genealogy of our aristocracy. But one does like to know with whom one is dealing, and so I looked you up in the *Gotha* last night at the Club. What were we talking about? Oh yes—of course I was not really afraid. Nonsense! But it was certainly a queer feeling. Brandy is a wonderful help in overcoming unpleasant sensations."

His cigarette was alight. He leant back comfortably, blowing smoke rings. I thought of many things while I watched them rise and disappear. Quite unexpectedly I had found the key to the weird ways of Solgrub. This broad-shouldered, blond giant, this strong-willed man of action, had a sore weak point. Twice within the last twenty-four hours he had mentioned this war episode. No, the man was no drunkard—alcohol was merely a means of forgetting for short moments, of helping him in the desperate struggle he had to carry on. He could not rest; a burning feeling of guilt haunted him, the shadow of this memory was enough to disorganize him.

The clock on the mantelshelf struck eleven, and Solgrub rose to leave.

"I have your word, Baron, that you will postpone your journey?" he said as he held out his hand to me.

"Nothing of the kind, Mr. Solgrub," I replied, annoyed. "I have not changed my plans, and I shall certainly leave by the evening train."

He lost all self-control.

"So you have not changed your plans!" he shouted furi-

ously. "Damn it, man! Do you think I have stolen my time? For two hours and more I have been here trying to make you see sense——"

I looked steadily into his face, and he realised at once that this was not the right tone to use to me.

"I beg your pardon, Baron." he said "I am a fool; after all this affair is no concern of mine."

I saw him to the door. On the point of leaving, he turned round once more: "How silly of me," he said, putting his hand to his brow. "I almost forgot the most important thing. I may be mistaken, Baron, but when I saw Dina this morning she seemed anxious to meet you."

It was as if I had received a stunning blow. For a moment I felt incapable of thought, at the next moment I had to fight a wild desire to get hold of Solgrub's shoulders, to beg him to tell me everything, to ask him whether she had mentioned my name,—the look on her face—what it had been when she spoke of me. But I kept calm, I did not give myself away.

"I shall write and give her my address," I said, and felt how my voice was trembling.

"Yes, do!" cried Solgrub, patting me on the shoulder. "*Bon voyage,* Baron, and see you don't miss your train."

CHAPTER XIII

I cannot say what made me change my plans. But I did not leave town by the next train. It was certainly not the thought of Dina. Solgrub's parting remark had impressed me at the time, but on second thought I did not attach much importance to it. It was hardly reasonable to assume that Dina should wish to see the man whom she held guilty of her husband's death. No doubt, Solgrub had used it as a wile to induce me to postpone my journey. How absurd that I had let him get the better of me, even for a moment!

Nothing had really happened to compel me to stay in town; it was a change of mood due to Solgrub's visit. Until he came to see me I had remained inactive. Chance had involved me in these events; taken by surprise, I had not even tried to defend myself, and had left things to take their course. Perversely I had shrunk into myself, trying to forget all that had passed the previous day. But the talk with Solgrub had roused me, and I decided to take my affairs into my own hands. The man guilty of Bischoff's death had to be brought to task,

and I must find him! But how? I pictured him sitting in his room, an inert, cruel, obese being, watching for his victims like a spider in its web. True, I had lost much precious time, but I would start on my investigation at once now. Of course the first thing to do was to find out where Eugene Bischoff had been between twelve and two o'clock on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. With the same impatience and haste with which I had made my preparations for my journey the previous night, I set out on my new task. The clock struck one. Vincent, as usual when I stayed in, had fetched my lunch from a neighbouring restaurant, and was setting the table. But I left the meal untouched. I was too excited. Nervously I walked about the room, making plans, rejecting them as too slow or impracticable; I followed up every conceivable possibility, found obstacles. Impatiently I began anew, got entangled in my combinations, but never was I doubtful of ultimately hitting on the right idea.

Suddenly and quite unexpectedly it happened. I had been standing at the open casement. The panes reflected the life of the street as in a kaleidoscope, a chain of miniature pictures following each other. They are burnt into my memory as with a hot iron; to this day I can recall every single one of them: the bluish white curtains on the windows opposite mine; the bent little lady in her old-fashioned bonnet crossing the road so carefully; a woman carrying a large basket of lemons.

The sign over the chemist's shop on the other side of the road swung to and fro, and it looked as if the Archangel

Michael, represented with hands uplifted in an attitude of benediction, were taking to flight. A passing tramcar hid the sign from my view for a moment. I noticed a confectioner's delivery van pulling up at the corner café. A red-haired errand boy carried some large yellowish brown boxes from it through the revolving doors of the café. And while I stood watching the ever-changing pictures in the panes, it came to me! It was such an obvious, such a simple thing. It was almost incredible that it should have escaped Solgrub's notice. The motor accident! Eugene Bischoff's motor accident! Of course that was the point from which to start the investigation. Burg Street lay in the seventh district and I knew the head of the police department, Doctor Franz Hufnagel—or was it Frederic? Not very long ago I had seen him about an anonymous letter which had been sent to me. Since then I had met him from time to time at a chess-club, and he would no doubt remember me. I had not the calm and patience to take the necessary steps myself at this moment. I wrote a few words and called Vincent: "Take this note to Dr. Hufnagel at the police station in Kreindl Street. He will have the report of a motor accident which happened on Friday in Burg Street looked up for you. Take down the number of the taxi and the name of the driver. Go to the taxi-stand and bring the man here. Should you not find him at the stand, wait till he returns, I must talk to him. That is all. You have understood what I want you to do, Vincent?"

Vincent left, and I had time to think. What chances had I?

Not very many. I might find out in what street Bischoff had taken the taxi for his journey home. Not a great deal that, but at least it would show me in what part of the town I must start my investigations, and another thing which, for the moment, I considered most important: I had gained upon Solgrub!

Two hours passed before Vincent returned. He brought the copy of the police report I had asked for; it read: "Report of P.C. Josef Nedved. On September 24th at 1.45 p.m. taxi-cab number A.VI., 138, chauffeur Johann Wiederhofer, skidding on the greasy road, came into collision with tram-car No. 5139. The taxi was slightly damaged, none of the passengers were injured." Vincent had found the man at his stand and had brought him along: he was waiting in the hall.

Johann Wiederhofer proved to be a talkative, middle-aged man. He apparently was still very much upset by the accident which had brought him into contact with the police. He held forth against police intervention, and the solidarity which in his opinion prevailed among all grades of tramway employees.

"I am innocent," he declared, "perfectly innocent! It was raining at the time, and the day before it had been raining too. The thing happened before I could say 'Jack Robinson'! And I am the only one to suffer anyhow! But just look at those tram-conductors and drivers—good-for-nothings, that's what they are! How they held to each other. And of course a

policeman was on the spot at once, too, sir. I told him, 'don't let's have a scene and give a show for this crowd!' "

He stopped to light a long "Virginia" cigar, and I made use of the pause to enquire about the extent of the damage done to his car. "Well, a bent and scratched mudguard, and a broken windshield. I lost the afternoon repairing the car. But on Saturday I was back at the stand, and who should come along do you think? The very same gentleman from No. 8! I wouldn't take that fare again if I were you, says one of the men. But I am not superstitious, not I! And so I say, 'Taxi, sir?' "

"You saw the gentleman come out from No. 8?" I interrupted, unable to hide my excitement."Where is your stand?"

"On the Dominikanerbastei, just opposite the café."

"Dominikanerbastei, No. 8," I said, as I stepped into the car. The taxi stopped in front of a dreary grey building. The entrance was pitch-dark and I could not find the porter's lodge. I found my way into a neglected yard at the back of the house. An ugly little mongrel stood on a handbarrow, and barked furiously at me. Two pale, seedy-looking little boys were playing on a rubbish heap with broken bottles, bits of wood, and bricks. I asked the elder one for the porter but he did not understand me, and gave no reply. I stood for a while wondering from whom I could get the information I wanted. From somewhere came the sound of running water—an old fountain, perhaps, or an overflowing rain-water pipe. The dog kept on barking. I returned to the entrance and groped my

way up the winding stairs intending to ring at one of the doors.

A nauseating smell pervaded the staircase; the musty smell of old household goods, stale vegetables and household refuse. In spite of my disgust, I continued on my way up the winding stairs, for I meant to accomplish what I had set out to do. On the first floor, on a door on the right, I read the name plate: " 'Hilaritas' German Academic Association." The letter box was over-flowing, and a paper was pinned under the name plate bearing the message: "Am at the Cafe Kronstein." The signature was unreadable. It was no use to ring at this door. I passed the offices of the "Hatters and Feltmerchants" on the other side of the landing. A visiting card on a third door said, "Major Wilhelm Kubicek." I rang the bell and gave my card to the maid who answered the door. She showed me into a very simply furnished room. Holland covers hid the chairs and couch. On the wall facing the door hung a large picture, representing a man in the uniform of a Field-Marshal, the iron cross pinned to his breast. The major rose to meet me. He wore a housecoat and warm slippers. He looked surprised and apprehensive, not knowing what might be the purport of my visit. I noticed a medley of things on the table from which he had risen on my entrance into the room. A tshibuk lay beside a bar of chocolate and a reading glass; a note-book and an open stamp album were partly covered by a duster. Introducing myself, I explained that I was anxious to have some information about one of the tenants in the house,

and I, as an officer, thought it best to address myself to a fellow-officer. This reassured him, but he asked, still somewhat suspicious, whether I came from some firm, but dropped his reserve when I told him that I had come solely on private affairs. He was sorry that his wife had gone out, for he would like to have offered me a glass of his good old Kontuczowka gin, but it was locked up and his wife had the keys. And not a cigar in the house either! He pointed to his pipe: "You see I never smoke anything but a tshibuk," he said.

I explained my errand to him, and gave him a description of the man Solgrub had spoken about. It greatly surprised him to hear that such an extraordinary being lived in the house; he had never suspected the existence of the monster.

"How strange!" he repeated several times. "I have been living in this house ever since I left the army. This street is just like a whispering gallery. If Mrs. Dolezal at No. 6 cooks boiled mutton with caper sauce for lunch, every child in the neighbourhood knows it by tea-time. You say he never leaves his room? But surely there would have been rumours about it! Nobody could keep hidden like that for years. Do you know, Captain, I believe you have been fooled! Some good-for-nothing has been pulling your leg, if you will forgive me for saying so."

He thought for a while, then asked:

"You say he is an Italian? Let's see. A Serbo-Croat lived here up to a year ago. He only spoke broken German and I was the only person who could speak with him in his mother

tongue, because I had been stationed for two years in Prepolje, in the Sandshak. I still shudder when I think of it. The stories I could tell you about Novibazar! But that man—Dulibic was his name—no one could call him a stout man. On the contrary. Yes, his name was Dulibic and he was a nephew of a member of the Reichsrat, and a lot of traitors they are if you ask me. . . . But he can't be your man. He left for Budapest more than a year ago. There is a tenant I haven't seen for two or three weeks. I asked the porter's wife: 'What is up with Mr. Kratky? One never sees him nowadays.' 'Inflammation in the ear' she says. Well, he is up and about again, a little pale and weak—a thing like that takes it out of one. However, he is not Italian—and not stout either."

After a pause, a new idea seemed to strike him: "I wonder whether you are looking for Mr. Albachary," he said in a low voice, and a knowing smile played round his mouth. "I hope you won't hesitate to speak frankly—as among comrades! I have been young myself. Mr. Gabriel Albachary lives at No. 8 on the second floor. The people that come to see him! Fine folk I can tell you—men of the best families. Well, some time or other anyone may need Mr. Albachary's help. I don't find anything wrong in that. By the way Albachary is a man of culture, a collector of pictures, antiquities of all kinds, Viennesia, theatralia and what not; an elegant, well-groomed old gentleman, unfortunately he asks for ten, twelve, fifteen per cent. as the case may be, and sometimes even for more."

Rather than be counted a client of a money lender, I decided to take the major up a point in my confidence.

"You are mistaken, Major Kubicek, I am not in financial trouble," I assured him. "I am not interested in Mr. Albachary. The story in short is this: Eugene Bischoff, the actor, whose name no doubt you know, has called on someone in this house several times during the last few days. It is more than likely that his suicide is in some way connected with these visits. He shot himself last night."

The Major jumped up as if stung by a tarantula.

"You don't mean it! What! Bischoff from the State Theatre?"

"Yes, I am anxious to know——"

"Shot himself? Impossible! Is it already in the papers?"

"Very likely."

"Eugene Bischoff! Why didn't you tell me at once! Of course he has been to the house. The day before yesterday—no, it was on Friday about noon."

"You saw him here, Major?"

"No, but my daughter did. Who would have believed it—Eugene Bischoff of all men! Tell me what do the papers say? Money troubles, debts?"

I did not reply.

"Nerves," the Major went on, "most probably it was nerves. Artists nowadays—overworked, overstimulated. My daughter found him rather nervous and absentminded; he did not seem to understand her at first, when she spoke to him.

Oh these great men! My daughter—well each of us has a hobby. I collect postage stamps, specialise in jubilee issues. When a collection is completed I sell it. There are always amateurs, you know. My girlie is interested in autographs, has a whole album full of signatures from many celebrities: painters, musicians, aristocrats, singers, actors. At midday on Friday she stormed into the room shouting: 'Guess, daddy, whom I met just now! Bischoff, Eugene Bischoff!' And picks up her album and flies out of the room again. In an hour she came back again beaming with joy. After waiting on the stairs for the best part of an hour, she caught Bischoff, and he had signed her autograph album for her."

"And where had Bischoff been all that time?" I asked.

"At Albachary's, of course."

"Is that an idea of yours, or——?"

"Oh no! My daughter saw him come out. Albachary saw him to the door."

I rose and thanked him for the information.

"Oh, you are not going yet?" he asked. "You have a moment to spare, why not look at my collection? I am afraid I have nothing extraordinary, nothing really rare." And he pointed with his pipe at the open page of the album "Honduras last issue——"

A few minutes later I rang at Mr. Albachary's bell. A tall red-haired boy opened the door. No, his master was not at home, he told me. To my question as to the time of his master's return he gave a vague reply.

He could not say, for all he knew it might be late in the evening.

I stood hesitating, wondering whether to go or to wait. Through an open door came the sound of footsteps, then of somebody clearing his throat.

"There is another gentleman waiting to see Mr. Albachary," said the boy. "He has been here this last half hour."

I noticed a greatcoat and a soft greenish felt hat on the hall stand, an ebony walking stick with an ivory knob was leaning against the wall. Where had I seen these things before? They seemed familiar. They must belong to someone I knew. Of all unpleasant things——! The man in the next room might look through the open door at any moment—I hastened away, after telling the boy that I would call again, probably the following day at the same time. As I reached the bottom of the stairs, it suddenly dawned upon me why that old coat and hat and stick were familiar. I stopped, utterly bewildered. Was it possible? Nonsense! I must be mistaken—it could not be he—how could he have found his way here? And yet—the coat and hat and stick I had seen a few minutes ago in Albachary's hall——belonged to Solgrub.

CHAPTER XIV

It was pouring when I left the house; the streets looked deserted. The chauffeur, wrapt in a mackintosh was reading a paper. With a feeling of uneasiness I thought of Solgrub. By what means had he so easily traced Eugene Bischoff's secret steps? Puzzled as I was, I soon gave up thinking about it. One thing was certain: I had taken unnecessary trouble. The enquiries at the police station, the cross-examination of the taxi-driver, my visit to old Major Kubicek—so much time wasted. The rain was beating against my face. I was tired, cold and hungry; I longed for my warm rooms. The driver, who had busied himself about the car, straightened when I spoke to him. "Myrthen Road 18," I said, and stepped into the cab. No sooner had I settled in the corner, than a new idea struck me, and made me change my plans. I had not followed the clue I had found to its end yet. That accident in the Burg Street! How did the taxi get there at all? It lay far out of Bischoff's way home. Why should the driver have taken

such a roundabout way? And there and then I stopped the cab, and in the pouring rain began to cross-examine the man. "Where did you take the gentleman on Friday, when you had the accident?"

"To Myrthen Street," he replied.

"Think what you are saying," I exclaimed angrily. "Can't you understand what I am asking you? You are driving *me* to Myrthen Street. *I* live at No. 18 Myrthen Street. What I want to know is where you drove to with the gentleman on Friday, when you had that accident!"

"To Myrthen Street," he said again.

"What, to 18 Myrthen Street, to my address?" I cried, greatly surprised.

"No, sir, not to number 18. I took him to the chemist's."

"Which chemist's? The one at the sign of the Archangel Michael?"

"There is only one in your street, sir."

As the taxi continued on its way, I pondered the meaning of Eugene Bischoff's visit to the chemist's immediately after he had left the money lender, and of all the chemists the one in Myrthen Street, which was out of his way home. No doubt there was some connection between Bischoff's visit to Albachary's and his subsequent drive to the chemist. It would be a success to find it! It should not be very difficult. I had intended to get some bromide, anyhow, so I would go to the chemist at once. It is easy enough to enter into a conversation. Professional secrecy? Nonsense.There was no such thing

for chemists—or was there? Well, even so, if one tackled the matter tactfully—I would speak to the old assistant, I thought, who always greets me so humbly: "At your service, Herr Baron: what can I do for you, Herr Baron?" Or would it be better to talk with the apothecary himself? Or——

Good God! All day I had been racking my brain in vain efforts and now mere chance—but then, it was *not* mere chance! Of course, Eugene had come for her sake to this particular chemist. He had known her ever since she was a little toddler and it was to her he went with his secret. And I—day after day I had watched her, hurrying with her books under her arm, from the chemist's to her lectures at the university—a small, golden-haired slip of a girl, always flustered, always in a hurry. And the last time in the foyer of the theatre. Now I knew why her voice was so familiar when I heard it over the telephone and why it should bring with it memories of strange perfumes, ether and herbs and spices. The scents pervading a chemist's shop, of course!

I felt elated at the importance of my discovery. And there was Solgrub, waiting in the office of the money-lender, wasting his time while a few minutes more would bring me face to face with the girl who had spoken those strange words about "The Day of Judgment," the words whose dark meaning bore somehow on Eugene Bischoff's suicide. The moment which was to bring the solution of this tragic puzzle drew near and I was waiting for it impatiently. Yet an odd, inexplicable fear was gnawing at my heart at the thought of it.

The girl's name was Leopoldine Teichmann. She was the daughter of Agatha Teichmann, the famous actress, who even now, after so many years, was spoken of in terms of passionate admiration in our circles. The girl had not inherited her mother's beauty, except for her wonderful red hair, but she, too, had a certain impatience with life, perhaps also her mother's ambition, for she dabbled in several arts. I remembered a picture of hers I had seen at an Exhibition, a still-life "Asters and Dahlias," a pretty, mediocre work it was. She had danced many times at charity performances, and once greatly surprised Eugene Bischoff by asking him to give her lessons; but the attempt to take up her mother's art petered out; in fact she never went beyond talking it over once or twice with Bischoff. Suddenly she disappeared from the circle in which she had played a prominent part. Faced with the necessity of earning a living, she studied pharmacology. I had lost sight of her, and was not a little surprised to see her again, an assistant to the chemist at the sign of the Archangel Michael.

It was still raining when I got to Myrthen Street. I stood for a while looking through the dimmed panes at the bottles and tubes and boxes, wondering how best to begin the conversation. I decided that it would be best to introduce myself as a friend of Eugene Bischoff's and ask to talk to her privately.

"Terrible weather, Herr Baron," the old assistant mumbled as I came to the counter, "terrible weather. I will be at your service in a minute."

The shop was crowded; people stood about waiting their turn. A bank messenger was looking for a prescription in his wallet; two maid-servants were whispering and giggling in a corner; a very pale young man with horn-rimmed spectacles sat reading a paper. A little barefooted boy asked for cough lozenges, an old woman with a heavy shopping basket on her arm asked for eyedrops, herbal tea, an embrocation and something to clear the blood. The apothecary sat at his desk in the adjoining room but Miss Teichmann was nowhere to be seen. "Miserable weather," mumbled the old assistant again, handing the bottle of embrocation to the old woman. "No doubt you have caught a cold, too, Herr Baron. A tumblerful of red wine, boiled with a stick of cinnamon, a few cloves and a little nutmeg, well sweetened, that's my prescription for a cold. Easy to take, too, it is! Over night a compress round the throat—Eighty Heller, Herr von Stilberny; thank you—good day Herr von Stilberny!"

He looked after the pale young man leaving the shop, then turning to me: "An interesting case this, a hemophiliac—called a bleeder. Has made the round of all the specialists, but nobody can help the poor soul. A bleeder—a very rare case, one in a thousand!"

"Herr von Stilberny—no, really?" said the old woman.

I asked for a hypnotic, and the assistant handed me a few white tabloids in a small cardboard-box.

"Where is the young lady who generally attends to me?" I asked.

"Miss Poldi?"

"Yes, I think that is her name."

"She was on night duty and has her morning off to-day. I expect her at any moment now. Why! it is nearly five, she should have been here an hour ago! Am I to give a message?"

"No, thank you, I will call again," I said. "It is nothing of importance. I was to bring her greetings from friends of ours at Gratz, and passing by I looked in. Perhaps you had better give me her address in any case."

I could see that the story of common friends in Gratz did not sound convincing to the assistant. He looked at me searchingly before writing the address on a slip of paper.

"She lives with her grandfather, Councillor Karasek, a very good family. I hear Miss Poldi is engaged to be married," he said.

. . . . .

I looked at the paper in my hand: "Leopoldine Teichmann, Brauhaus Street 11, second floor, door number 21." Afraid of missing her should she be on her way to the chemist's, I decided to wait for a while before calling at her home. I walked up and down the road till a heavy shower drove me to shelter in my flat. I looked out for her from my bedroom window. In vain. As time passed it grew dark, and I found it difficult to distinguish people's faces. When I saw that the shutters on the shops opposite were being put up, I left my point of observation.It was unlikely that she would come back that night.

I would have to go and see her after all. It was a drive of twenty minutes and I would arrive just about supper time. It was rather awkward to call for the first time at such an hour. And if she were out? She might be at the theatre or she might have gone to see friends. If so, I would have to wait for her. I must see her to-night! It took me some time to find a taxi, and it was nearly eight o'clock when I arrived at the Brauhaus Street. No. 11 proved to be the usual commonplace block of suburban mansion flats. Small shops on the ground floor: a hairdresser, a dressmaker's, a wine bar. I found the stairs badly lit, the second floor almost completely dark, and as I had no matches with me I found it impossible to decipher the nameplate. I heard steps on the floor below, two men were coming up the stairs behind me. Suddenly a flash from an electric torch played across the wall from door to door and stopped, revealing a brass nameplate on one of them.

"Councillor Frederic Karasek," said Dr. Gorsky's voice.

"Doctor!" I exclaimed startled. "How on earth do you come to be here?"

The light of the torch was turned on to my face, and Solgrub said: "Oh, here you are, Baron!"

"You, too!" I cried amazed. "And you do not seem surprised at all to find me here."

"Surprised? Are you joking, Baron? Of course I knew you would be here after reading the evening papers," said Solgrub as he rang the bell.

CHAPTER XV

I did not know what to make of it all. Perplexed by this unexpected meeting, I did not understand till I saw the tear-stained face and troubled eyes of the old woman who opened the door that some misfortune had befallen this house.

Solgrub gave her his name.

"I called up an hour ago," he said.

"I know. The young master is expecting you. Will you kindly wait for him," she whispered. "He will be back soon. He has only run across to the hospital. Please, this way, but walk softly, the master must not hear you. He does not know yet what has happened—we did not dare tell him."

"He does not know it?" asked Dr. Gorsky surprised.

"No, he does not, and not half an hour ago he asked for Miss Poldi to read the paper to him, as she usually does every evening. So I told him that she had not come back from work yet, and now he sits waiting for her, dozing in his armchair with the paper in his hand."

Solgrub surveyed the drawing-room. "Biedermeier furni-

ture," he said, exchanging a knowing look with the Doctor. Then he turned once more to the old woman:

"Young Mr. Karasek is a son of Councillor Karasek?"

"No, he is his grandson, he is a cousin of Miss Poldi's."

"And the accident happened in this room?"

"Oh dear no! It happened in the small room across the hall, the one Miss Poldi uses as a laboratory. It was like this: I was in the kitchen talking to Marie, our maid. I am the housekeeper and I have been with the master for over thirty years—as I said, I was talking with Marie in the kitchen this morning, when the young master burst in upon us and cried: 'Some hot milk, Mrs. Sedlak, quickly, some hot milk!' 'Hot milk?' I asked, 'for whom, for the master?' 'No, for Miss Poldi. I found her in the laboratory, in convulsions on the floor.' It frightened me terribly when he said convulsions, but the young master was quite calm. Nothing ever makes him lose his head. I took the milk from the stove and hurried to the laboratory, and sure enough there was Miss Poldi on the floor, throwing herself from side to side, her dear little face as white as chalk and her lips blue, and I thought: 'It is an epileptic fit.' And I knelt down by her side and caught hold of her hands. And 'Jesus Maria, help us,' I shrieked, for Miss Poldi had a small blue bottle in her hand. 'What is it? Why are you shouting like that?' asks the young master, and as soon as he sees the bottle he gets hold of it and smells it. In a moment he was at the telephone: 'The ambulance, Miss,' I heard him say, It came within a few minutes, and it was

lucky it did; the doctor who came with it said so, too. 'We are not a minute too soon, perhaps there is a chance. A mistake? Impossible! A student of pharmacology would recognise this stuff by its smell.' If the gentlemen will excuse me, I will go now. I must prepare the master's gruel, he will ask for it when he wakes."

She closed the window, rearranged the yellow silken cover on the piano and after a glance round the room to see whether everything was in order, she left us. I got up to look at the pictures on the walls. Amateurish efforts, most of them pastels and water-colours: "A Chestnut Tree in Flower"—"Portrait of a Young Man Playing the Violin"—"Market Day in a Village," a very indifferent composition this—and also the picture I had seen before at an exhibition "Asters and Dahlias, in a Greenish Grey Japanese Vase." So she had not sold it after all. But there was one picture which did attract me, a large oil painting, hanging in the shadow over the piano. It was a portrait of the beautiful Agatha Teichmann wearing the costume of Desdemona. It was more than twenty years since I had seen her last, but I recognised her at once.

"A strange meeting after twenty years, Doctor!" I said pointing at the picture of the great tragedienne. The inexorable flight of time became painfully clear, and I looked wistfully at the picture as I realised how distant my youth had grown.

"Agatha Teichmann," said Dr. Gorsky, adjusting his glasses. "The beautiful Agatha Teichmann. Yes, I saw her

once on the stage. How old were you at that time, Baron? Very young—nineteen or twenty, I should think. Not an altogether serene memory for you, eh! I never was a favourite with women, Baron. That is why I can look unmoved at this old picture. I only saw her once—as Medea—that is all."

I did not reply. Solgrub, who had listened to us without understanding, shook his head, and after a furtive glance at the portrait went into the laboratory.

We sat waiting silently. The Doctor grew impatient, and kept looking at his watch. I, too, felt the time heavy on my hands. I took a book from the writing table, but it was a dictionary and I put it down again.

After a quarter of an hour Solgrub came back to the drawing-room. His hands and knees were covered with dust as if he had been looking for something on the floor. Dr. Gorsky jumped up.

"What did you find, Solgrub?"

Solgrub shook his head: "Nothing!"

"Really nothing at all?"

"Not the faintest trace of anything," replied Solgrub, looking absent-mindedly at his hands. "No new clue."

"Why won't you understand, Solgrub, that you are on the wrong track?" said the Doctor. "You have been running after a phantom all day long.Your monster does not exist, never did exist; it is the result of wrong deductions, a creature of your imagination. How often must I repeat that? As long as you hold on to this absurd idea you will not get any further."

"And your plans, Doctor?"

"We must try to influence Felix."

"Influence Felix? Not much chance of that."

"If you will give me time——"

"Give you time, Doctor? No, I can't give you time. Are you really blind to what is happening? Can't you see, that while we are talking, Baron Yosch has made his decision? He will not let us discuss his word of honour. He has his finger at the trigger, he will do Felix's bidding to-night—to-morrow—who knows? And you ask me to give you time!"

I wanted to contradict him, to protest against his assumptions, but Solgrub did not give me a chance.

"I am on the wrong track, am I?" he cried. "That's what you told me when I inquired at the taxi-stand near the theatre for the man who drove Bischoff to the home of his assassin; that is what you said again when I had found the house and went upstairs. Yes, you told me that it was nothing but an *idée fixe*."

"So you were at the money lender's." I interrupted him.

"The money lender's?" he echoed surprised. "Of whom are you talking?"

"Of Gabriel Albachary; he lives at Dominikanerbastei 8."

"Is the man a money lender? You never told me so, Doctor."

"Quite right. He does lend money on security," remarked Dr. Gorsky. "Not an acquaintance to be exactly proud of . . . but Albachary is at the same time one of our greatest con-

noisseurs and art collectors. Eugene Bischoff knew him for nearly twenty years, and occasionally made use of his Shakespearean library and collection of costume pictures."

"Did you talk with the man, Solgrub?" I asked.

"No, he was not at home. But I made use of the opportunity to have a look round the flat for the murderer."

"I suppose we had better not ask with what results?" remarked the doctor.

"Oh! Be quiet," shouted Solgrub, but softened his voice at once, remembering that we were in the house of strangers. "It is true I did not find the assassin, but only because I had imagined him to be different from what he looks—that is why I did not find him. There is a mistake in my reasoning, in my deductions. But all the same the murderer is up there, and I shall find him, Doctor, you may be sure of that."

As he spoke my pride rose. It irritated me to see him standing before me so sure of himself, and I wanted to mislead him, thwart him, make him doubt himself. Coolly, deliberately, I said: "Suppose, Solgrub that Felix is right, that I am the man guilty of Eugene Bischoff's death—what then?"

Dr. Gorsky caught hold of my arm, staring at me in amazement. But Solgrub shook his head.

"Nonsense!" he said. "Don't talk such nonsense. You don't believe, Baron, do you, that you can mislead me so easily? Listen, that was the door bell, it must be young Karasek returning from hospital. Do please let *me* talk to him."

CHAPTER XVI

"He takes us for newspaper reporters," whispered Dr. Gorsky to me. "We'll leave it at that. Solgrub seems to wish it so. I am glad you are in mufti, for a Captain of the Dragoons in full uniform as the representative of a local paper——"

An insignificant-looking young fellow entered the room—the type that plays the part of the *arbiter elegantiarum* at his suburban café. "Evening, gentlemen," he greeted us and introduced himself. "My name is Karasek." He passed his hand over his carefully parted hair, and offered us some cigarettes from his case—a cheap affair of German silver.

"It is kind of you to spare us a few moments after the harassing time you have been through to-day. May I ask how the young lady is getting on?" asked Solgrub.

"Don't mention it, sir. I know—— Professional duties—I know. My father had a good deal to do with the Press. Chief Architect Hermann Karasek, Chairman of the Council

of the XVIII City District. Perhaps you knew him. Quite possibly you knew him. Sorry, my poor cousin—they would not let me see her."

He bent forward, and, speaking under his breath as if giving away a secret, he added: "The doctors are trying chloraethyl now."

"Inhalations, I suppose," remarked Dr. Gorsky.

"Chloraethyl," repeated young Karasek. "Everything possible has to be tried."

"Did you see the doctor?" asked Solgrub. "Do you think your cousin will be well enough to see visitors to-morrow?"

Karasek shook his head: "To-morrow, hardly. I saw the assistant—the Professor himself is too busy as you can imagine—the assistant says short of a miracle—as long as there is life, you know. And the Sister says it is not likely she will get through the night."

"As bad as that?" said Solgrub. Mr. Karasek lifted his hands and dropped them again. Dr. Gorsky rose and picked up his hat.

"Going already?" asked the young man. "One moment, gentlemen. Won't you take some refreshment? I know it is after dinner, but a cup of coffee—it won't be long, I shall order it at once. By the way, to which of you did I speak on the telephone? I should like to know."

"I called you up," said Solgrub.

"You see, I was surprised—how did you know? True, she did smoke very much—twelve, fifteen cigarettes a day, started

before breakfast. The young girls of to-day—my grandfather must not know that. Think of it! An old man over eighty, one of the old school. But how you knew that barely five minutes before—it beats me! Curious, I thought, how does he know?"

"It is very simple," Solgrub replied. "Your cousin did not attempt suicide of her own free will. She was driven to it. Lately, three similar cases have happened. The last not twenty-four hours ago. In all these cases the same person had evidently had a hand in it, and the method employed was the same. And am I right in assuming that the young girl, immediately before the attempt, asked you for a cigarette?"

"A cigarette? No she did not ask me for a cigarette, she always had a box full of them on her desk. What she asked for was a cigarette paper."

"A cigarette paper," cried Solgrub. "I might have thought of that! A cigarette paper! Can you guess now, Doctor, why Eugene Bischoff took the pipe? Just one more thing before we go, Mr. Karasek—a question you may think peculiar—has not your cousin spoken of the Day of Judgment during these last few days? You understand—the Day of Judgment."

"Yes, Mr. —— I did not catch your name."

"Solgrub, Waldemar Solgrub," said Solgrub impatiently. "And in what particular connection did she speak of it? Think, man, perhaps you can remember."

"In what connection? Speaking of painting. She had an idea, the day she and Ladstaetter and I—I must tell you

Poldi is engaged to a friend of mine, a very nice boy, works at the same office with me. And he comes to see us every day. They had arranged to get married in the Spring. There isn't much money, of course, but he has a good position, and Poldi is earning, too. Trousseau, furniture, everything ready. And grandfather had given his consent. Well, on the Thursday last week, we had a little birthday party for one of our colleagues out there at the Stag Inn, just a few of us, young girls and young men, a very gay party it was, too. On the way home—the three of us, Poldi and Ladstaetter and I, went a little in advance of the others. Ladstaetter had his guitar with him. Poldi began again. The work at the chemist's bored her, no pleasure in that, she would go back to art. Ladstaetter, instead of letting her talk, stops her in the middle and begins to quarrel. 'Poldi!' he says, 'if you were in earnest—! well, you know best what you are doing, and if you do not care whether we get married in March or not—you know I am not a rich man and I have to count on your earnings, at least for the beginning and if you leave your post at the chemist's——' 'And who says that I shall not make much more with my pictures?' replies Poldi. 'And far larger sums.' 'But you have exhibited twice before!' says Ladstaetter, 'and never sold a picture. What is the good of trying to force one's way without connections?' And Poldi said: 'But this time I shall succeed.' 'Will you,' shouted Ladstaetter, 'pray, why just this time?' And Poldi says calmly, 'Because I shall do much better work. You can rely upon the Master of the Day of Judgment for that.' "

"The Master of the Day of Judgment!" interrupted Solgrub. "Who, for God's sake, is he? Do you know him?"

"No, I don't. And Ladstaetter, too, asked: 'Who the devil is he? One of those painter fellows again who keeps on asking you to his studio?' But Poldi laughed and said, 'Jealous, Ludwig? But you need not be, really. If I told you how old he is!' Ladstaetter was beyond himself, and insisted: 'Young or old, Poldi, I want to know. I have a right to know.' 'Very well, Ludwig,' says Poldi and looks at him, 'You have a right to know and shall. I shall tell you the moment I am famous. You and no one else. But not before I am a famous artist.' By then the others came up and for the rest of the evening Poldi would not say another word."

"We know his methods, now, don't we, Doctor?" said Solgrub. "We know the cases and we know the bait he uses. But what are his motives, that is the riddle. What is he driving at with these diabolical tricks? Please go on, Mr. Karasek. What happened the next day?"

"Next day Poldi came home with a strange gentleman at about noon. A fine, tall man, clean shaven, not in his first youth, slightly grey—Poldi passed me in the hall, and took him to her room without introducing me, a thing I am not accustomed to from Poldi. And I said to myself: Ladstaetter would not like that—alone with a stranger—on the other hand I did not wish to intrude. Better wait till the gentleman leaves, I thought, and then stop him and ask him outright what he wants with Poldi. But when I looked into the room

half an hour later, the gentleman had left, but the book was on the table, and I said to Poldi, 'The gentleman has forgotten his book, and such a fat dictionary must be expensive——' "

"The gentleman left a book?" asked Solgrub; "where is it? May I see it?"

"Certainly, there it is," replied the young man.

Engineer Solgrub took the book from the desk, the very same book, the leaves of which I had been turning not half an hour ago. Solgrub opened the book, and exclaimed, surprised: "An Italian Dictionary! Was I right or not? The monster speaks Italian—there you have the proof. Eugene Bischoff has carried the book about in order to be able to talk with the monster, but look! what is that? Doctor, look, what does it mean?"

Dr. Gorsky bent over the book.

He read aloud: "Vitolo-Mangold, Italian Dictionary.Somewhat heavy, not easy to handle. A kind of Encyclopædia," he said.

"Don't you notice anything else?"

Dr. Gorsky shook his head.

"You really can find nothing else?" asked Solgrub again. "Do look at the book again! Mr. Karasek, you saw the gentleman when he came—are you sure he had no other book with him?"

"I am sure he only had this one."

"Strange, very strange. Doctor, this is an Italian-German Dictionary. There is no German-Italian part in this volume.

It looks as if Eugene Bischoff had no need of the German-Italian part. What do you make of it? Eugene Bischoff did not talk with the murderer; he listened to him in silence. One moment! Don't disturb me! One of them talks, the other listens without a word, and translates—what can it mean? Let me think!"

From the door came suddenly the thin trembling voice of an old man: "What has happened? Mrs. Sedlak sits in the kitchen weeping. What is the matter with Leopoldine?"

Court Councillor Karasek, Agatha Teichmann's father, whose Goethe-like features I remembered so well, had sadly changed. An old, old man, ghastly thin and frail, he stood in the doorway, leaning on his stick, staring with expressionless eyes before him.

The younger Karasek jumped up.

"Grandfather," he stammered, "nothing has happened. Whatever should have happened? Poldi was tired. She is sleeping on the couch over there, as you see. She has been on night duty, poor thing."

"I am worried about her," sighed the old man. "She is stubborn, just like her mother was, she will not listen to me. You know, Heinrich, Agatha—first her divorce, oh the sorrow of it, and then for that good-for-nothing of a lieutenant—coming home in the dark, I smelt the gas. Agatha, I called, Agatha!"

"Grandfather," begged young Karasek, with a touching expression of tenderness and affection on his otherwise insipid

face, "Grandfather, let that be. That happened so long ago."

"I have it," said Solgrub suddenly in a loud voice, as if he were alone in the room. "We can go now, Doctor, we have finished here."

The old Councillor lifted his head.

"You have visitors, Heinrich?" he asked.

"A few friends from the office, Grandfather."

"That's right, Heinrich, a little amusement, a game of cards. Excuse me, gentlemen, for not welcoming you before. My eyes—I have always been short-sighted—I have been told they would improve as time went on, but with me it is the other way round. But what is the matter with Poldi? I have been sitting waiting for her to read the papers to me——"

"Grandfather," said the young man, with a desperate look towards us. "let Poldi sleep, she is so tired. Don't wake her, I will read the paper to you to-day."

CHAPTER XVII

Dr. Gorsky was in an execrable mood. He grumbled and cursed as we descended the dark stairs.

"Solgrub!" he called. "Where on earth is he? He has my electric torch. Dashes down, leaves me in the lurch—nice manners, I must say! Mind the steps! Will you go in front, Baron? To the right? To the left? If only I had matches. I know you can see in the dark. I always said you had something of a cat in you. Your mute bow up there just now, really it was precious. What were you thinking about, didn't you notice that the old man is blind, totally blind? God forbid that I should grow as old as that. At last! Heaven be praised, we are downstairs at last."

There was a ground-fog, the sky was overcast, the lamps threw faint stripes of light on the damp pavement. There was a line of people in front of the Cinema. The doors of the wine shop were opened, and for a moment a hoarse song and the woeful sounds of an orchestrion reached my ears.

The engineer came towards us. "Where have you been so long?" he asked. "I have been waiting for ages. Ten past nine —too late to go and see the Spaniole to-night."

"Go to see Gabriel Albachary?" cried Dr. Gorsky. "What on earth do you want with him again?"

"What do I want with him? You are slow, Doctor—a child would grasp things quicker. I want to look once more at the Master of the Day of Judgment. Why are you staring so? The monster! Can't you understand? Eugene Bischoff's assassin."

Dr. Gorsky shook his head. "You think that old man is the assassin?"

"Which old man?"

"The Spaniole."

"Good God! Doctor, you have a diabolical way of mixing up things. Listen: First the cigarette paper—it is not difficult to guess the part that it played in the tragedy. Then the book, the dictionary; I opened it and saw—there is the key. I wanted to think, to concentrate, but that old Councillor came with all his questions. I did not listen to him. Believe me, Doctor, a methodical way of thinking is a good thing. The assassin—he does not hear, he only talks—what can that mean? I know now what it means. The matter is settled. I have nothing to be proud of, this day has been a day of mistakes. Truly a monster, a colossus, and I sat facing it for an hour and did not recognise it."

We walked along slowly. Dr. Gorsky nudged me. "Do you understand?" he asked.

"Not a word," I replied.

Solgrub gave me a cross look.

"It is quite unnecessary that you should understand. Why should you? Everything is in order, that is enough. You can sleep quietly to-night. You will not go away, and there will be no hunting accident, no cross in the Gotha almanack after your name—at least not for the moment. That much you do understand, don't you?"

"Won't you explain a little more clearly what you have found out?" begged the Doctor.

"Not to-day, Doctor. I only have a vague idea of what has happened. A very indistinct picture—besides there are gaps in the logical course of events.I do not know for whom Eugene Bischoff's first bullet was meant, and as long as I don't know that——"

"Will it ever be possible to find that out?"

"Perhaps, Doctor, it will be. Is there anything to prevent me from repeating Eugene Bischoff's experiment? Quite possibly I shall have some information to-morrow which may interest you. I cannot tell you more to-day. Have patience with me, please."

"Solgrub!" cried Dr. Gorsky. "If you are serious—and it looks as if you knew what you are about—if an experiment is to be made, for Heaven's sake be careful!"

"All right, Doctor," said Solgrub calmly. "Do you think

I shall run into danger blindly? I had my warning. I know what to beware of. Look here——!"

He stopped and drew a small revolver of a strange foreign make from his pocket.

"There he is, a good friend of days gone by, and many a time has he accompanied me when I was out on patrol duty in the hills between Karin and Gensan—but now, I have no use for him; we must part. Take him, Doctor. I shall claim him again. You know that monster up there, at the Spaniole's place. It does not kill. It forces one to commit suicide. And it has no power over me as long as I am without a weapon."

"And what will you do with him, Solgrub?"

"He must be destroyed," said the engineer calmly yet fiercely: "Into the fire with him. That poor child for whose life the doctors are fighting to-night must be his last victim."

"Into the fire with him—you say! into the fire with him? If I understand you rightly, the monster is a——"

"I say, Doctor," cried Solgrub, "it looks as if you began to understand. It took you some time. He is not of flesh and blood. Long since dead, he still lives, and steals his way into brains—but there shall be an end to him. I shall finish this spectre. No more about it now; you shall see it."

We had at last reached a more frequented part of the town in which I knew my way about. It was a wide road, bordered by acacia trees and brightly lit by arc lamps. Somewhere quite near were the barracks of the 73rd Regiment.

"Where are you taking us to?" grumbled Dr. Gorsky. "We

have walked a long way round, quite unnecessarily. I might have been home long since."

"I do not mean to let you go home yet," said Solgrub. "Over there is the Café Gulliver. Won't you come in and have a drink?"

Dr. Gorsky refused for both of us without asking my leave.

"I shall go home by tram," he said; "yes, by tram," he continued, looking at me. "I am not an officer, and have no conventions binding me. You can stop and wait for a passing cab, if you like."

"Oh! do come in," pressed the engineer. "If you are lucky, you will make the acquaintance of an interesting man. My friend, Pfisterer, frequents this café. A *genie universel,* has a phenomenal memory, is a true polyhistor, a dancer, painter, etcher, artist, bar-mixer and anything else you like, to boot. He is a virtuoso in the art of keeping his creditors at bay, and he must have five hundred of them at least."

"Thank you, Solgrub, I cannot stand long-haired geniuses."

"My friend, Pfisterer, is of the porcupine variety. Besides, he is just the man I need to-day. Come along, I do not want to go home alone."

We entered the café—a somewhat shabby place, and our entry made quite a stir among the few guests. The engineer seemed to be a well-known guest, for the girl at the pay-desk greeted him with a friendly, "Hullo, Doctor."

A surly waiter came to take our order.

"Is Dr. Pfisterer still here?" asked Solgrub.

"Hasn't been away at all to-day," he replied with a gesture expressing contempt and disgust.

"How much does he owe you?"

"Twenty-seven kronen without tips."

"There you have your twenty-seven kronen and your tips," said Solgrub. "And tell me, where is Dr. Pfisterer?"

"Over there, writing in the billiard room as usual."

At one of the marble-topped tables sat a long, thin, red-haired man. A half empty beer bottle stood on the table next to an egg-cup he was using as an ink-stand, and a sheaf of manuscript. A very young girl, with hair dyed an unnatural yellow, sat next to him, busy making cigarettes. A dirty paper, covered with close writing, was pinned on the wall opposite the table, which on investigation proved to be a document of some importance. It read: "The undersigned declare that they withdraw regretfully the charge made against Dr. Pfisterer of stealing two illustrated periodicals, as he threatened to take proceedings. Yours truly, 'The Table of the Four.'"

"There you are," said Solgrub. "Good evening, Pfisterer."

"Evening. Don't disturb me," replied the man without looking up.

"May I ask what you are working at?"

"At the dissertation of a young idiot, who is yearning for a Doctor's degree. Waiter, some stewed pears, with a disgusting amount of syrup, and a cup of Turkish coffee *à la Pfisterer*—I must finish by eleven."

"Let me look—may I?" Engineer Solgrub took one of the

papers from the table: " 'Pektins and Glucosides as flavouring substances of vegetables!' Good heavens, since when have you taken up chemistry, too?"

"I know as much of it as the gentlemen at the University anyhow," replied the learned one, continuing his writing.

"Pfisterer, have you a moment? I need some information."

"Quickly then, if you must have it. The lad is coming at eleven to fetch his life's achievement. Out with it."

"Is there a painter known as 'The Master of the Day of Judgment?' "

"Giovansimone Chigi, well known master, pupil of Piero di Cosimo. Anthing else?"

"Lived——?"

"1530 at Florence—you ignoramus!"

"Took his life?"

"No, died in the Convent of the Seraphic Brothers of the Seven Pains. Insane."

"Insane," repeated Engineer Solgrub.

Pfisterer put his pen down. I noticed that he had a glass eye and a red birthmark on his right cheek. "That's all you wish to know?"

"Yes, thank you."

"Much good your 'Thank you' will do me! No, three questions you have asked me, like Mime asked Wotan, and like him I ask you three. First: Have you any money, Solgrub?"

"Your bill is paid."

"Excellent! I need not ask any further questions. Begone!

I have noticed long ago that you have deserted to the wealthy ones of the community. Fie upon thee, out of my sight!"

. . . . .

We drank our brandy without sitting down.

"Died insane," said Solgrub. "He is armed more powerfully than I thought. Insane! Nonsense! I have gone through the war in the East. I am not afraid of the Day of Judgment."

CHAPTER XVIII

As I sat at breakfast next morning a strange thought came to me. I could not get rid of it however much I tried to occupy my mind with more important and serious matters. It came back, persisted, and finally I gave in. I rose, took five of the tablets from the chemist's, and dissolved them in a glass of water. My eyes fell on the ready-packed trunks which still stood in the middle of the room. I had intended to go away, but this plan would not materialise now that this crazily ridiculous idea had made it impossible.

On second thought as I sat at my desk the idea no longer seemed so very mad and ridiculous. A dreamless sleep from one night to another, cheating the devil of a grey, murky Autumn day—breaking the tyranny of time by a slight movement of the hand—now at once, whispered something within me. Why wait any longer? My hand was on the glass. I struggled against the impulse. Not yet! I had to go out, had important matters to settle—matters that could not wait any

longer. Later, I said to myself under my breath. This evening, I said, and replaced the glass on the writing table.

On my return at noon I found a note in Solgrub's hand.

"I have important news for you. I beg you not to leave town. Do not do anything until I have seen you. I shall be with you in the afternoon."

I stayed at home. Anyhow, I had not meant to go out again. I fetched a book from the shelves and sat down at my desk. Towards four a heavy storm broke; the rain fell in torrents, and I had to close the windows quickly to avoid its flooding the room. I stopped to watch the people seeking shelter in the doorways, and it was amusing to see how quickly the street looked deserted. My bell rang. Solgrub, I said. A pity he has been caught in this storm. Important news. Well, we shall see. I did not hurry, replaced the book I had been reading on its shelf, picked up a sheet of paper from the floor, and pushed the armchair into its place at the writing table. Then I went into the hall and asked Vincent, "Where is the gentleman who asked for me?" No one had asked for me. It was the afternoon mail. A long expected letter from Norway had come. Iolanthe, the young girl from the Stavanger fjord, had written at last. A large white envelope without a seal or a trace of scent; so like her. Jokingly I had named her Iolanthe after the heroine of some French novel, the title of which I cannot remember, but she had not been pleased with the name. It was not a name to her taste. Her name was Augusta. So she had remembered me at last, and the promised letter had come.

All right, I thought, now it is my turn. I have waited long enough; and I threw the letter unopened into a drawer of my desk.

At seven o'clock, I gave up writing. It had grown dark. The rain still pelted against the window panes, and black clouds hung low over the roofs. Too late! He would not come to-day. Would that rain never end? The glass into which I had put the white tablets stood before me. Not yet! It was not time yet for that. I had some work to do first. Annoying work, I had postponed over and over again. But now I must see to it, I must get order into my papers. Notes, documents, crumpled or hastily folded letters, maps and pictures, the accumulated ballast of many years encumbered my drawers, so that I could hardly find my way through it. Vincent came to light a fire, the room grew warm and cosy and then I fetched a bundle of dusty papers from the bottom drawer. Strange coincidence that I should first of all find the copybooks from the military academy. I turned the leaves of one—the awkward hand of a boy of sixteen! "Militia (Landwehr) serves as support for the common army. Conscription must serve in person. Krakau, Wien, Gratz, Budapest, Pozsony. Nine Landwehr and Honvéd districts." On the margin a scribbled note: "On Monday mother's birthday. Mountain artillery: quick-firing guns with detachable safety cover. Train, tool car, eight food-carrying animals. On Tuesday an early march, to be in attendance at four o'clock." Dawn of my youth! That was how my life began. Away with the rubbish, into the

fire with it. Some letters from my guardian, dead more than half a lifetime. The picture of a very young girl, whose name I had forgotten; on the back of it "February, 1902, true friendship shall bring us closer to each other." . . . Letters, postcards. Minutes bearing four signatures I could hardly remember. A diary begun on the 1st of January by one who had died a young woman at Doctor Demeter's sanatorium at Meran. A pastel sketch. An account from my steward about the sale of some beech and oakwood from my estate. A manuscript catalogue I had made of my Japanese and Anamitic silk pictures, and a letter of thanks from the Museum of Natural Science for the gift of these pictures, a map of the Rottenman Tauern, an invitation to a Court Ball and now a picture of more recent times, a photograph, the gift of the daughter of the Dutch Consul in Rangoon. She gave it to me the day I came to take leave, and she wrote something in Cingalese letters at the bottom of it. "Don't attempt to decipher it," she had said. "You will never know what I have written here for you." I held the picture in my hand and stared at the curious signs, and still wondered whether they meant love or hate. Everything into the fire! The Rangoon picture resisted, it would not submit to destruction, but the flames were strong and they consumed the proud eyes, the slightly puckered brow, the whole slim figure, and the never deciphered words.

"I beg your pardon," a voice came suddenly from the door.

"I am very late. You are alone, Baron? Has Solgrub not come yet?"

I jumped up. I had not heard the door bell. Blinded by the glow of the fire I did not recognise my visitor in the semi-darkness of the room.

"I knocked but received no reply," said the late guest, closing the door. "Has Solgrub not been here?"

He came into the radius of the lamp on my writing table, and I recognised him. It was Felix, Dina's brother.

"Solgrub? No he did not come," I said, somewhat perplexed. "I have not seen him since yesterday."

"Oh, then he will be here soon," he said, taking the seat I offered him. "Solgrub, my dear old friend Solgrub, has a fixed idea. He imagines that you are in no way connected with the happenings that led to Eugene Bischoff's suicide. And he asked me to call here, to submit the results of his investigations to me in your presence."

I listened to him silently. I did not reply.

"We, you and I, Baron," he continued, "we know how things have really happened. Solgrub—he is an imaginative creature—has a tendency to be ridiculous at times. He associates my brother-in-law's suicide with the one of a young girl unknown to me; he talks of an experiment (he expects to disclose some important matter) and of the influence of some mysterious unknown being. Heaven knows! it was not easy to listen to him calmly. If I have understood him aright, his system of false conclusions is built up on the fact that Eugene

fired two shots, one at himself, the other at someone unknown. When Solgrub comes to explain his mistake to us, as I have no doubt he will, I will give him the solution of the riddle of the second shot. Eugene Bischoff had never used his revolver before, that is why he tried it before turning it on himself. That is the very simple explanation. Strange that Solgrub is not here yet."

"Do you intend to wait for him?" I asked brusquely, for I wished to end the conversation.

"If I do not disturb you——"

"Then you must allow me to go on with my work."

I did not wait for his reply. I took a packet of letters from the table and began to look through them.

"The green Bosnian prayer rug," said Felix, and his eyes wandered through the dim room. "How long is it since I sat here last? I was a volunteer in your regiment, and I came to ask your advice in an affair I had very much at heart. *Eheu, fugaces, Postume, Postume*——! That time you spoke like a friend—everything into the fire, Baron?"

"Everything into the fire, little nothings of the past. I don't think Engineer Solgrub will come to-night. It is past nine o'clock."

"He is sure to come."

"If so, may I offer you a glass of sherry or a cup of tea in the meantime?"

"No, thank you. If I may ask you for the glass of water on your writing table——"

"I would not advise you to drink that," I said and rang for my man. "It is the sleeping draught I have prepared for to-night."

"For to-night," repeated Felix softly and gave me a long searching look.

"It was wrong not to have asked you to come in this morning," began Felix again. "When I returned to the window half an hour later you had gone. Perhaps you had the very natural desire——"

I interrupted him not with words or with a gesture, merely by an astonished look.

"I saw you in the garden of the villa, pacing to and fro in the rain—— Or was I mistaken?" he continued, somewhat out of countenance.

"At what time did you say?"

"Ten o'clock."

"That is hardly likely," I replied. "At ten o'clock I was at the offices of my solicitor. Our consultation lasted from about nine till about eleven."

"Then some likeness—some very curious likeness—must have deceived me."

"Possibly," I said, my anger rising.

He still felt sure that I had stood under the windows trying to catch a glimpse of Dina—I could see it in his eyes. I could no longer control myself—a wild desire to hurt him, wound him, touch his pride, overcame me. I fetched the picture, the picture I had never shown to anyone before—I found it at

once and held it in my hand, held it so that he must see it. I saw him wince, saw his hand holding the glass tremble . . . and then I threw it carelessly into the fire. I felt a sharp pain, like a stab with a knife through my heart. I thought of a night, a winter night, and the next moment I wanted to tear the picture from the flames with my bare hands. But I overcame the desire and never moved. Darkness seemed to surround me. I saw nothing but the glow in the fireplace and the white bandaged hand.

"Now I have the answer I came for," I heard Felix's voice. "To tell the truth I was not clear as to your plans, and passed the night in writing down this affair between you and me—to make sure. I understand you, Baron. You have taken your decision and it is final, or you would not have parted with that picture."

He took a large white envelope from his pocket and held it so that I could read it. It was addressed to the commander of my regiment.

"Here is the letter," he said. "It is not needed any longer. Will you allow me to make use of the opportunity?" And he threw the letter into the flames.

And at this moment I understood that the hour had come and that my lot was cast. And with this certainty the picture of the day that had passed seemed strangely changed. It was as if ever since the early morning I had been obsessed by the thought that I must die because I had given my word. And all that had occupied me through the day disclosed its hidden

meaning. It was not a mere whim that made me destroy my papers. It was because I wanted to die—nothing must remain for curious, prying eyes. The long-awaited letter from Norway, Iolanthe's letter, I had left unopened—whatever it contained, there was no sense in reading it now. And over there on the desk stood the glass waiting, and it meant sleep for me, sleep without an awakening.

"There is the bell," said Felix. "That is Solgrub. Now he may come and tell us his fairy tale. It will not change your plans."

I heard steps, Solgrub—the Engineer—I feared the moment he would enter the room; whatever he could tell us would sound so foolish now, so ridiculous, absurd. I saw the ironic smile round Felix's mouth—"Solgrub, come in, Solgrub," he called. "What is your news? Let us have it!"

It was not Solgrub. Dr. Gorsky stood in the doorway.

"It's you, Doctor. Are you looking for Solgrub?" asked Felix.

"No! I am looking for you," said Dr. Gorsky slowly. "I have been at your house, I have been sent here."

"Who sent you here?"

"Dina: I kept it from her. I did not tell her. Solgrub——"

"What is the matter with Solgrub?"

Dr. Gorsky came a step towards us staring at me. "Solgrub—it was about seven—I was still at my consulting room when my telephone rang—'Who is speaking?'—'Doctor, for God's sake, Doctor!'—'Who is speaking?' I called again. I did not

recognise his voice. 'Doctor, for God's sake, quickly. Tell Felix——' 'Solgrub, is it you? What has happened?' 'Away!' he howled, 'Away!' in a voice no longer human. And after that I heard nothing more beyond a noise and a chair being knocked over. I tried twice to get him again. No answer. I dashed down, jumped into a cab, ran up his stairs, rang his bell again and again—nobody opened. Down the stairs, like one distracted, for a locksmith. Solgrub was lying on the floor with the telephone receiver in his hand——"

"Suicide?" asked Felix with a stony look.

"No, heart failure."

. . . . .

"It was the experiment," said the Doctor. "No doubt he is the victim of his experiment."

"And what did he want to tell me in his last moments?"

"He wanted to name the murderer. Eugene Bischoff's assassin."

"His assassin? But you said heart failure?"

"This assassin has many weapons. This one, too. I know where to find him. We must render him innocuous. Solgrub is dead.Now it is our turn.Do you hear, Felix? And you, Baron?"

"Please do not count upon me," I said. "I have already disposed of my day to-morrow."

Felix turned his head. Our eyes met.

"No, not now."

He took the glass from the writing table.

"Excuse me," he said, and poured its contents on the floor.

CHAPTER XIX

The morning after Solgrub's funeral we met in the front garden of a café off the main road, not far from the town park. It was a bright frosty morning. Pedlars came to our table, offering pears and grapes and branches of evergreens. A Bosnian had some knives and walking-sticks for sale. A tame jackdaw hopped about looking for bread-crumbs. Felix had asked for some illustrated papers, but they lay untouched on the table before him, and so we sat exchanging perfunctory remarks about the time of the year, proposed journeys, and Dr. Gorsky's unpunctuality.

At last, at about nine o'clock, he appeared. He excused himself: night duty, rounds through the wards, an operation at seven. He remained standing and hastily swallowed a cup of hot black coffee.

"That's my breakfast," he said. "That, and a cigar. Poison for one's nerves. I advise you not to follow my example."

Then we started on our errand.

"Cabbage, sour herrings, bad cigarettes," remarked the Doctor, as we mounted the stairs to the flat of the Spaniole. "The right atmosphere for our purposes, Baron. It is quite possible that you may need a small loan; not much, a modest sum of two or three thousand kronen. And you are bringing your sureties along with you. We must not startle him—the man is sure to be distrustful at first—better leave things to chance. Another flight of stairs. I hope he is at home, if not there's nothing but to wait."

Mr. Gabriel Albachary was at home. The red-haired servant led us into a drawing-room, crowded with works of art of all periods and all styles. Immediately after us Mr. Albachary entered the room. A dainty, small man, over-elegant in dress —his moustache dyed black, a monocle screwed in his eye, diffusing a strong smell of heliotrope. With a movement of his hand, Albachary offered us seats, looking at us searchingly for a moment. Then he turned towards me: "If I am not mistaken, Baron, you were the O.C. of the regiment of my son, Volunteer Edmund Albachary. I know you from the races."

"Edmund Albachary," I repeated, trying in vain to remember. "The volunteer, Edmund Albachary. Of course, it was some time ago was it not? How is the young man?" "How is he? I wish I knew. Perhaps he is doing well. I am sorry to say he is not living with me any longer. He left more than a year ago." "Gone abroad?" "Yes gone, gone much farther than abroad. I may travel day and night for ten years and yet I could not reach him. I knew your late father, too, Baron; it

must be thirty years or so. And may I ask to what I owe the pleasure of your visit?"

I felt embarrassed. I had not intended to give him my name. But I decided to play the part that had been assigned to me, and told him of my desire for a loan.

Albachary listened with a polite air, nodding his head once or twice. Then he said: "I am afraid, Baron, you have been misinformed. I have for some time been a dealer in works of art. I am really only a collector, I never was a financier. Sometimes, just to oblige them, I get a loan for my friends, and of course I am at your service, Baron. May I ask how much you would require?"

"I need two thousand kronen," I replied, and noticed that Dr. Gorsky moved uneasily in his chair.

The old gentleman looked up surprised. Then he smiled.

"You are joking, Baron. I quite understand. You are in dire need of two thousand kronen, and within the next few minutes you will be offering me half a million for my Gainsborough."

I did not know what to say. Dr. Gorsky was biting his lips, looking at me angrily. Felix tried to save the situation.

"You are right, Mr. Albachary, it was a joke," he said. "We knew that you did not like to show your treasures to all and sundry, and chose a rather awkward way to introduce ourselves. Is this your Gainsborough?"

"No, this is a Romney," explained Mr. Albachary. "George Romney, born at Dalton, Lancashire. It is a portrait of Miss

Evelyn Lockwood. I owned the original, but sold it a few days ago to England."

"This then is a copy?"

"Yes, a copy, very good work, too! Not quite finished, as you see, some parts are merely sketched in. A Professor at the Academy recommended a very talented young artist to me. Unfortunately too much of a genius. The young man committed suicide."

"Suicide, here in your home?"

"No. In his apartment."

Dr. Gorsky interposed: "But he worked here, in your flat? In which room, would you mind telling me?"

"In my library," replied the art dealer, surprised. "It has the best light for the purpose—morning sun."

"One more question, Mr. Albachary. How long has your son been in a sanatorium for nervous diseases?"

"For eleven months," the old man stammered, staring at the Doctor with a frightened expression. "Why do you ask?"

"I know why I am asking, Mr. Albachary, and I will tell you at once. May I ask you to take us to your library?"

Gabriel Albachary led the way without another word. At the door of the library Dr. Gorsky stopped.

"The Monster," he said, pointing to a large folio, resting on a Gothic reading-desk in the bay window—a volume of a shape I had never seen before. "The Monster. This book has caused your son's misfortune: it is the cause of Eugene Bischoff's suicide. This book——"

"What is it you are saying?" cried the art dealer. "It is true Bischoff read the book the last time he came to see me. He really came to look up some pictures of costumes but when I went out, he was standing at that desk. 'Don't let me disturb you, Eugene. I am going out for lunch, now,' I said. We were old friends, you see. I had known him for twenty-five years. 'If you need anything, just ring for the man.' 'All right,' he replied, and I never saw him again, for when I returned he had gone. And the gentleman who called three days ago asked for that book at once. He made notes and said he would return."

"He did not return: he could not come. He died the same evening. How did you come by that book?"

"My son brought it back from Amsterdam. For God's sake, what does it all mean? What is in that book?"

"That is what we are going to find out now," said Dr. Gorsky, turning the heavy, copper-ornamented cover of the folio. Felix, standing behind him, looked over his shoulder.

"Maps!" cried the Doctor. "*Theatrum orbis terrarum*. An old geographical work."

"Etched and hand-coloured," added Felix. "*Dominio Florentino. Ducato di Ferrara. Romagna olim Flaminia*. Nothing but maps. We were mistaken, Doctor."

"Turn the leaves, Felix! *Patrimonio di San Pietro et Sabina Regno die Napoli. Legionis Regnum et Asturiarum principatus*. Now the Spanish provinces are coming. Stop! Can't you see? There is writing on the back of this map."

"So there is, Doctor. Italian."

"Yes, old Italian. *Nel nome di Domineddio vivo, giusto e sempiterno ed al di Lui honore! Relazione dei Pompeo dei Bene, organista e cittadino della cita di Firenze*—— Felix, that's it! There we have it! Mr. Albachary, will you let me have the book?"

"Take it! Get it away from here. I do not ever want to set eyes on it again."

"But how on earth am I to do it? How shall I take it away? I can hardly lift it!"

"Two sturdy men from my laboratory, and at three o'clock it shall be at my place," said Felix.

CHAPTER XX

In the name of Our Lord, Whose name be ever praised, I, Pompeo dei Bene, Organist and Citizen of the City of Florence, have here set forth an account of the events which took place in my presence during the night of Simon and Juda, in the year of our Lord, MDXXXII. Written with my own hand.

I shall be fifty years old to-morrow, and as matters stand in this city, a man may quite easily lose his life before his time has come, so I who have not written for many, many years, will to-day confess the truth, and write down what happened during that night to Giovansimone Chigi, called Cattivanza, the famous master builder and painter, whose fame had travelled far and wide, and whom men call in these days the "Master of the Day of Judgment." May God forgive him his sins as I trust Him to forgive me mine.

As a boy of sixteen I had chosen painting as my art and hoped to make a living by it. And my father, who was a silk-

weaver in Pisa, had put me into the work-room of Tommaso Gambarelli, and I worked with him at many great and beautiful pictures. But on May 24th, the eve of the Holy Pentecost, the very day the enemy took the Monte Sansovino, the said Tommaso Gambarelli died of the plague in the Hospitale della Scala. So, in the name of Our Lord, I sought another master, and went to Giovansimone Chigi, who had his work-room in the old market place, near the booths of the merchants. Now this Giovansimone was a small, sullen man; summer and winter he wore a cap with earflaps, made of blue cloth, and one who saw him for the first time might have taken him for the captain of a Moorish privateer, rather than for a Christian and citizen of Florence. And he was so miserly that he would not give me half a loaf a week. I had not been with him seven weeks, and already I had spent seven gold florins of my own.

One evening as I returned from the Mathematics School, I found my Master talking in his workshop with Messer Donato Salimbeni, of Sienna, a Doctor in the service of the Cardinal Legate, Pandolfo de Nerli. Salimbeni was a man of lofty spirit and venerable presence, much travelled and very accomplished in the arts of the laboratory. I knew him from his visits to my former master, and his drugs had greatly eased me when I caught the fever through riding in the damp night air to Pisa.

As I came in I saw Messer Salimbeni looking at a picture representing Our Lady surrounded by angels. The Master

walked to and fro in front of the fire, for it was very cold. And when Messer Salimbeni saw me, he signed to me to come nearer and asked: "And he?"

"I only have this one," said my Master and made a wry face. "He paints flowers and little animals in a praise-worthy manner. It is with such little things that he succeeds best; and if I had to put owls and cats, singing birds and scorpions into my pictures, he might also be useful to me."

He sighed and bent down to put two fresh logs on the fire. Then he went on: "In my young days I succeeded in doing many great things and with my art I have helped to raise the fame of this city. It is I who have made the beautiful bronzen St. Petrus; you can see him to this day in front of the altar of the Church of Santa Maria del Fiore. More than twenty sonnets praising my work and my name were nailed to my door at the time. And other and greater honour was done me. But to-day I am an old man and I do not succeed as of yore."

And he pointed to a picture of "Christ Teaching in the Temple" and one of "Maria Magdalena Borne Heavenward by Angels" and said: "All you see here is nothing. You need not tell me so, for I know it only too well, and nothing hurts more than blame. In my youth I had the power of visions, and I saw God Almighty and the Patriarchs, I saw our Redeemer, the Saints and Our Lady and the Angels. And wherever I looked, I saw them in a most wonderful way. High up in the clouds I saw them, and down here in my workshop. As clearly as if they were alive before me. And as I saw them I painted

them, and there were not many in my art who could equal me. But to-day my eyes are dim and my glowing visions are gone."

Messer Salimbeni was leaning against the wall in the shadow; I could not see him, I only heard his voice.

"Giovansimone!" he said, "all human wisdom is patchwork, less than patchwork; it is merely smoke and ashes and shadow before the face of Our Lord. Yet it has been given to me, in lifting my thoughts to God, to fathom some of the secrets this world is full of. And I can give you back what you called the power of visions, and I can even awake it in those who never had it before. That is as nothing to me."

The Master looked up startled. For a while he remained in deep thought; then he broke into a loud laugh.

"Messer Salimbeni!" he said, "it is well known in the city that you boast of all kinds of mysterious knowledge and arts. But whenever you are supposed to use them, you make excuses. What you have said just now is sure to be one of your vain boasts. Or have you perhaps learnt this art at the court of the Mogul or the Grand Turk?"

"This is none of the Pagan arts," explained the wise Doctor. "I owe it to the kindness of the Lord, who has led me on to the way of knowledge."

"If that be so," replied my Master, "I have no greater wish than to see something of this art of yours. But let me tell you that if you mean to play a joke on me you may fare badly."

"Not much can be done to-day beyond settling the day on which the deed shall be done. But before you decide upon it,

take counsel with yourself, Giovansimone! For I tell you it is a stormy sea you are trying to sail, and maybe it would be safer for you to stay in port."

"You are right, Messer Salimbeni," cried the Master. "It is best to be cautious. Everyone knows you are my enemy, though you do me honour in words. I must not trust you."

"It is the truth," said the Doctor. "Why should I hide it? Something stands between you and me. You had a quarrel with Cino Salimbeni, my brother's son, and he gave you hard words, and you shouted so that all that stood round could hear: 'Patience, and the day for this will come!' And a few days after he was found dead on the path in the meadows that leads to the convent of the Servi brothers; there he lay with a dagger through his throat."

"He had many enemies, and I predicted his misfortune," muttered my Master.

"It was a Spanish misericordia dagger, and the Spanish armourer had engraved his name on the blade," continued Messer Salimbeni. "Now this dagger belonged to a man who had fled from Toledo, and he was caught and brought before the Eight. He cried and swore that he had lost the dagger in the old market place, near the booths. But they did not believe him and he was done to death."

"Honoured be the sentence of the Eight," said my Master; "and past things are dead and done with."

"Know then," cried Messer Salimbeni, "that past deeds are

never dead, and he who committed them must reckon with the justice of the Lord."

"Let me tell you, Messer Salimbeni, that I was at home painting a Holy Agnes with the Book and the Lamb, and there came Messer Cino and asked for a reconciliation, and we drank together and parted friends. And the following day, the day the foul deed was done, I was abed sick, as I can prove by witnesses. May God condemn me to eternal perdition if it has not been thus."

Said the Doctor: "Giovansimone! Not without reason art thou called 'Vileness.'"

When the Master heard the nickname people had given him, he rose in anger, and his fury deprived him of his reason for he could not bear to be called thus. And in his fury he got hold of his firelock, which always stood loaded in his workshop, and waved it about as one distracted and shouted: "Away with thee, thou rogue, thou bastard of a priest, away with thee and do not dare ever to come here again."

Messer Salimbeni turned to walk down the stairs, but the Master followed him with his gun, and I heard him for a long time swearing and shouting at the door.

Some time after—it was on the eve of Simon and Juda—Messer Salimbeni came a second time. And he spoke as if nothing had happened between him and the Master:

"The day you are waiting for, Giovansimone, has come; and I am ready for it."

The Master looked up from his work. When he recognised

Messer Salimbeni his rage overcame him again and he shouted: "What do you seek here again? Have I not turned you out of my house?"

"To-day I shall be welcome," replied the Doctor. "I have come to set about the work of which we talked, and the time for it has come: this is the hour."

"Begone! Begone!" said the Master sullenly. "You said hard words to me. I shall make you pay for them!"

"My words were not meant for one who had done no wrong," replied Messer Salimbeni, and turning towards me: "Up, Pompeo! This is not the time to play the fiddle. Go and fetch me this and that!"

And he gave me the names of the herbs and spices he wanted for his thurifications, and how much of each. Amongst the herbs he mentioned were many I had never heard of, and others one might pick up under any hedge. He also bade me fetch two gills of burnt spirits.

When I returned from the Apothecary's, the two had come to an understanding. And Messer Salimbeni took the spices and herbs from me and showed them to the Master: this is this and that is that. And then he prepared the incense. When he had done, we left the workshop; and as we descended the stairs, the Master let Messer Salimbeni see that he carried a dagger and a sword under his cloak.

"Messer Salimbeni," he said, "and if you were the Evil One in person, think not that I fear you."

We went through the Chiari road and over the Rifredi

Bridge; we passed the cloth works on the other side of the river and the little church where the old marble sarcophagi stand. It was a clear night and the moon stood high in the sky. And at last, after wandering for an hour, we reached a hill, which on one side fell steeply towards a quarry. A country house stands now on the top, but in those days goats were grazing on it.

Here Messer Salimbeni stopped and told me to gather faggots and thistles and to light a fire. And he spoke to my Master: "Giovansimone, this is the place, and the hour has come. Once more I bid thee: take counsel with thyself! For he must be good and strong of soul and heart who dares to undertake this."

"Alright, alright!" said the Master. "Have done with talking and begin thy work!"

With many ceremonies Messer Salimbeni drew circles around the fire. Then he threw some of the incense into it, and as soon as he had done so he left the circle.

A thick cloud of smoke rose from the fire, and grew higher and higher and shrouded my Master. But as soon as the smoke dispersed, Messer Salimbeni threw more incense into the fire. And he asked: "What do you see now, Giovansimone?"

"I see the fields and the steeples of the city and the sky, nothing else. But now I see a hare running across the fields, and oh! wonder, he is bridled and saddled!"

"A strange sight, indeed, but you will see many more of them to-day."

"It is not a hare at all," cried the Master, "It is a goat. No, not a goat, it is some beast from the east and I do not know his name—it jumps and it wriggles wildly."

Suddenly my Master began to salute and to bow.

"Look," he cried, "my neighbour the goldsmith who died last year. Woe to you, Master Castoldo, your face is covered with sores and bruises."

"Giovansimone! What can you see now?" asked the Doctor.

"I can see peaks and rocks and gulfs and ravines and grottoes. And one of the rocks, a large black one, is floating in the heavens, and it does not fall. And this is a great miracle."

"What you see is the Vale of Josaphat; and the black rock you see floating in the sky is the Throne of God, Giovansimone. The appearance of the rock is a sign that you are destined to watch this night such mighty things as no man ever saw before you."

"We are not alone," said the Master in a frightened whisper. "I see men and women; they are singing and jubilating, and there are many of them."

"No, not many, for only few are called to sing the Gloria of the Last Day with God's Angels," said Messer Salimbeni softly.

"And now I see thousands and thousands—an endless host, knights and councillors and richly-dressed women, and they are weeping and stretching their hands towards heaven, and there is great wailing and lamentation amongst them."

"They are wailing and moaning for that which never was

and never can be again," cried Messer Salimbeni. "They are weeping because they are condemned for all eternity and are banned from the face of the Almighty."

"A flaming sign stands in the skies," cried the Master. "A flaming sign that glows in a hue I never knew before. Woe to me! This is no earthly hue, my eyes cannot bear it."

"It is the red hue of blood and sin and fire," called Messer Salimbeni in a thundering voice. "The colour of blood and sin and fire, the hue the sun takes on the Day of Judgment."

"Whose voice is it I hear, calling my name from out of the storm?" cried the Master, and his body shook. And suddenly he began to howl like a beast, and his voice pierced the stillness of the night, and he would not stop.

"Woe be me," he shrieked. "They are here, they grope for me, the demons of hell! They are coming, the air is full of them."

And, hunted by fear and terror, he tried to fly, but the invisible demons caught him and he fell and fought the air. Shrieking, his face distorted, he rose, tried to run, fell again and he was such a pitiful sight that I felt I should die with the horror of it.

"Do help him, Messer Salimbeni!" I begged in agony, but Messer Salimbeni shook his head.

"Too late," he said. "He is lost, for the demons of darkness have gained power over him."

"Mercy, Messer Salimbeni, Mercy!" I cried.

But the demons of hell had got hold of my Master and were

carrying him off and he shrieked and struggled. And Messer Salimbeni went towards him, and where the hill falls towards the quarry, he stood in his way.

"Murderer. Foul murderer, without fear of God! Stop and confess thy evil deed to my brother's son!"

"Mercy!" cried my Master, falling on his knees and covering his face with his hands.

Messer Salimbeni lifted his fist and struck the Master a violent blow right in the middle of his forehead, so that he fell to the ground like one dead.

. . . . .

I know now that it was not cruelty, but that Messer Salimbeni thus freed my Master from the power of his visions. We carried him back to the workshop, and he lay there without a sign of life until the bell for Angelus rang. He did not know, on waking, whether it was morning or night. He was raving, and spoke again and again of the demons of hell and that terrible colour, the red of blood and sin and fire.

Later on, when madness seemed to leave him, he lost himself in thought. He sat in a corner of the workshop, staring before him, and not a word did he speak to anyone. But I heard him at nights in his room, moaning and crying and singing prayers. And on the day of the feast of St. Stephen he disappeared; and no one knew what had become of him.

One day, some three years later, on my way to Rome, I came to the Convent of the Seraphic brothers of the Seven Griefs in which convent are the girdle and the veil of the

Holy Virgin and also a ball of wool she had spun with her own blessed hands. And the Prior accompanied me to the Sanctuary in which the relics were deposited. There I saw a monk, standing on a scaffolding; and it was some time before I recognised my former Master.

"His mind is deranged," said the Prior, "but his conceptions are great. We call him the Master of the Day of Judgment, for it is the only thing he ever will paint. And when I ask him: 'Master, put here a Visitation, and The Healing of the Lame on to that other wall, he grows furious and one must let him have his way."

The sun was setting and a rosy light fell on the stone paving of the Church. On the wall I saw the Floating Rock, and the Vale of Josaphat and the Host of the Blessed Ones and Demons of Hell in a thousand different forms; I saw the fiery pool, and I saw the Master, for he had painted himself amongst the damned. It was done with such truth that I shuddered with horror as I beheld it.

"Master Giovansimone," I called, but he did not recognise me. With trembling hands, murmuring prayers incessantly, he worked at the figure of an angry cherub with a haste as if the demons of hell were still pursuing him.

. . . . .

That is all I can tell of the Master of the Day of Judgment. I do not know anything more. For when I came to the Convent a few weeks later on my journey home, the scaffolding was empty, and the monks showed me his grave. May the

Hope of us all—the bright Star of Morn—guide him and all of us to the Host of the Redeemed on the Day of Judgment! Amen!

I never saw Messer Salimbeni, whom I call the real Master of the Day of Judgment, after that night of Simon and Juda; and it may be that he returned to those far kingdoms of the East in which he passed so many years. But I have kept the secret of his art, and I am putting it down here for those who believe that they have a good and clear conscience. Take thou, daring man, then, Cormill soaked in spirits, and it must be three parts. Then add to it...

CHAPTER XXI

"Go on! Do go on!" insisted Dr. Gorsky.

"That is all," said Felix. "Here the manuscript ends quite suddenly."

"Impossible!" cried the Doctor. "It cannot end thus. The most important part of the account. . . . Just let me look!"

"See for yourself, then, Doctor. Nothing more, but maps, Spanish provinces. *Granata et Murcia. Utriusque Castiliae nova descripto. Insulas Balearides et Pytiusae.* Nothing is written on the back of the maps. *Andalusia continens Sevillam et Cordubam.* Not a trace of any more writing; the account has never been finished."

"But the composition of the drug! How did Eugene Bischoff come to know the composition of that drug? The end of the account must be there. You must have missed a leaf, Felix. Look again."

All three of us stood bent over the folio. Felix slowly turned back some of the leaves.

"A leaf is missing here," said Dr. Gorsky suddenly. "Here, between Asturia and the two Castilias. The leaf has been cut."

"You are right," said Felix, "the page has been cut with a blunt knife."

Dr. Gorsky clasped his head.

"Solgrub!" he cried. "That was Solgrub's doing. Do you understand. . . . Nobody was to try the experiment after him! He destroyed that last page of the story—the page that contained the composition of the drug. . . . What now, Felix?"

"What now, Doctor?"

They stared at each other helplessly.

"I must tell you," said the Doctor, "that I had decided to try the effect of the drug myself. Of course, taking all possible precautions."

"I had the same intention," declared Felix.

"No, Felix, I should never have let you—that you, a layman in medicine, should——But what is the good of quarrelling about it now! None of us will ever know what inconceivable powers were those that drove Eugene Bischoff and Solgrub and heaven knows how many more into a mysterious death."

He banged the heavy book cover down.

"It will not mislead anyone again," he added. "Solgrub, our poor Solgrub, was the last victim. The longer I think of it—the physiology of the brain gives us some points to start from. I have formed a theory, Felix. No, I don't believe it

was a vision of the Day of Judgment. I rather think that the effect of the drug in every case——"

I jumped up. I had a sudden idea. A thought rushed through my mind, threw me off my balance. I was incapable of hiding my excitement. I looked at Dr. Gorsky and Felix—they took no notice of me, and I left the room softly.

Quickly, through the garden, before they noticed my disappearance! No, the secret was not lost. It was lying there, waiting for me. I—I would be the only one to fathom this mystery. A few more steps....

The door of the summerhouse stood open. Everything remained as I remembered it: the revolver on the writing table, the tartan shawl covering the couch, the overturned inkstand, the broken bust of Iffland.... Everything had been left in the same place, and on the table over there lay my pipe. I held it in my hand, a thin layer of ashes to remove and then I saw it. A blackish brown mixture, the drug, the incense of the Siennese Doctor, believed to be lost, the magic that had torn from the murderer, Giovansimone, the confession of his guilt.

A slight fear of the unknown curled within me when I lit the match. Fear? No, it was not fear. It was the feeling a swimmer experiences when he takes a plunge into deep waters. The water closes over his head, but he knows that a second later he will be rising again. That is how I felt. I felt sure of my nerves. I was waiting for visions of the Day of Judgment. I was waiting for them, with intense curiosity, yet calmly.

Armed with all the weapons of reason of a man of our times I looked forward to the spooks of days gone by.

Smoke and shadows are all you shall see, I told myself . . . and then I took the first whiff of smoke from my pipe.

Nothing happened. Through the blue clouds of smoke, I saw the death mask of Beethoven on the wall opposite and in the open window I noticed the green branches of the chestnut trees swaying in the breeze: and over them showed a corner of cloudy sky. A large bluish glittering beetle of a kind I did not know crawled on the floor, but that I had noticed before.

A second, a third whiff—I realised the strange acrid flavour of the mixture. I only felt it for a moment, it disappeared quickly. I had an uncomfortable sensation of being surprised here by the Doctor or Felix and looked out through the window. Nobody was in the garden. They were in the house discussing matters, and did not notice my absence.

I remember having taken five whiffs from my pipe in all. Then a hibiscus shrub appeared to me right in the middle of the room.

I was fully aware that it was a delusion. A memory, but a memory of unheard-of vividness, so plastic that I stepped towards the shrub instinctively. I counted the reddish violet flowers of the shrub; there were, as far as I could see, eight of them, and a ninth of a deep red which opened as I stood watching it.

Suddenly the hibiscus disappeared and I saw in its place the deep green of an arequa palm, and leaning against its

trunk a Chinaman in a coat of silver grey silk. What surprised me most was the abstruse ugliness of his face, the face of a new born child. But I was not frightened, for I knew that my imagination, excited to the utmost by the action of the drug, reproduced a picture that had impressed itself on my mind somewhere in my travels in foreign lands. But this memory showed itself in a picture, curiously perverted into extreme ugliness. At this stage of the experiment I was still the cool onlooker of a strange optical phenomenon. I still saw the table and the couch and the outlines of the room but they appeared shadowy and unreal, like a dusky confused memory of something that had been a long, long time ago.

This vision gave way to a picture of a brick wall and an open barn which stood immovable before my eyes for many minutes, the sight of which made me feel incredibly wretched. The barn was lit by the glow of a smithy fire, and I noticed two men with bare bodies and arms. A vague fear overcame me as I watched them, and grew into mad terror.

Suddenly one of the men turned round and came towards me, with strange swaying movements. He bent his head and shoulders and his arms hung lifelessly down his sides. Now he stopped in front of me, and now he lifted his left arm with his right hand, groping with the fingers of the left hand for me. I felt them on my wrist. I started back shrieking. I heard myself screaming. The fear of death was upon me . . . The eyes, the lips of the man, were rotted away. . . . The face. . . . Leprosy! I howled desperately. . . . Leprosy! Leprosy! I broke

down. I hid my hands, whining. . . . Leprosy! For a short moment I caught desperately at the thought. . . . Delusions! Phantoms! It is only a nightmare! But the thought vanished and I remained alone with the awful visions, carried away by a torrent of fear and horror.

. . . . .

I do not know what happened afterwards. I lost myself and I came back. The first thing I noticed was a grated window, high up in the wall, so high that I could not reach it. In the twilight I could make out a table and two chairs, screwed to the floor. A heavy iron cage-shaped bed stood at the narrow end of the room.

I was crouching on the floor in a corner. I had a feeling as if I had suffered terrible things in this room for a long, long time, but could not recall what they were. I remembered dimly a large red face with a round chin and drops of perspiration on the forehead, against which I felt a deep aversion.

I was very thirsty, and I knew, without actually seeing it, that an iron mug stood next to the bed, attached to the wall by a chain. I crawled towards it and drank. I felt an overwhelming impulse to break the mug to pieces, but it withstood all my efforts.

The door opened suddenly and light flooded the room. Two men entered. One of them was tall, broad shouldered, clean shaven, and wore horn-rimmed spectacles. His face was familiar. I had seen him many times before. The other was a small thin man, with a short pointed grey beard and lively

eyes. His hands were buried in the pockets of his coat. I looked at him, but could not associate him with anyone.

"Dementia, alternating type; attacks come in series," said the tall man in a foreign tongue, but I understood him all the same. "Has been under treatment for four years. Officer in a cavalry regiment, staff officer. Bad heredity on the side of both parents."

I lay on the floor and kept a sharp eye on him.

"Reflex rigidity of the pupils; heightened tone of muscles and blood pressure.... No, please leave the door open, the attendant.... Attention!"

But I had him already on the floor. I crouched on his chest and strangled him. Then I leaped ... out into the corridor.... Someone threw himself upon me, I freed myself, hit a broad, red face twice with my clenched fist and ran. I heard shouts, whistles, and found myself suddenly in the open.

Trees, shrubs, a wide plain. I stood alone, deep silence surrounded me. The land was as if asleep. Not a leaf, not a blade of grass stirring, only the small feathery clouds in the blue sky kept floating onwards.

I realised, of a sudden, that I had lived like a beast in that room, that I had crawled about on the floor for years between the table and the bed, roaring like a wild beast, throwing myself again and again at the door. And now they were coming to fetch me back.... They were there, surrounding me, and I was in fear and terror of the large man with the broad red face.

"There he is," I heard him say, as he stood, staring at me. His wide mouth distorted, grinning, drops of pespiration glittering on his forehead, his hands behind his back. I knew what he was hiding behind his back; I screamed, I tried to fly. . . . They came on me from every side. . . . No help. . . . And the revolver was in my hand. How did I come by it? I did not know, but there it was. I held it, I felt the deadly cold metal of the barrel.

And at the moment I held it to my temple, at that very moment an immense fiery sea appeared in the skies. It blazed and flared up in a hue I had never seen before, but I knew its name, "red of blood and sin and fire." My eyes were blinded by the storm of this weird, horrible colour. "Red of blood and sin and fire," was its name, and it was lighting up the day of doom.

"Quick! His hand!" A voice called near me, and I felt my arm grow as heavy as lead. But I tore myself away, I would not live any longer.

"That will not do. Let me do it!" The voice spoke again. I heard a roaring and singing noise. The terrible light in the sky faded, darkness fell. For a second I saw long forgotten things: a table, a couch, blue wall paper, white curtains moving in the breeze, and then I saw and heard nothing more.

CHAPTER XXII

I came to as from a deep sleep. For a while I lay without any notion of time or place. I could not remember where I had been last, and what had happened to me, and I searched in vain for a clear, connecting idea. I opened my eyes. I had to make an effort to overcome a feeling of sleepiness and weariness, a strange *malaise*.

I began to recover my senses. I found myself stretched on a couch in the music room of the Villa Bischoff. Dr. Gorsky was sitting by my side, holding my pulse, behind him stood Felix. The veiled light of the table lamp fell on to the pages of the folio on the table.

"How do you feel now?" asked the Doctor. "Headache, giddiness, nausea? Ears singing? Does the light worry you?"

I shook my head.

"You have an admirable constitution, Baron. Anyone else. . . . Your heart is all right. I think you will be able to go home by yourself."

"You have been extremely imprudent, Baron," said Felix. "How could you? You must have known what would happen. It was lucky that Dina was in the garden, and heard your screams. . . ."

"And we did not come a moment too soon," interrupted Dr. Gorsky. "You were holding the revolver to your head. I cannot hide it from you, you treated me pretty roughly. I flew towards the wall like a rubber ball. But for Felix's idea——"

"It was not my idea, Doctor, as you know well enough," interrupted Felix.

"Yes, Doctor Salimbeni's horse-cure. A blow on the forehead, and you gave up all further attempts at suicide. You must have gone through terrible visions of fear and horror. Do you realise, Baron, how near you came to crossing to the other bank?"

Memories of all that had happened flooded my mind. I jumped to my feet, I tried to tell them—the leper, the asylum, the terrible light in the sky . . .

"Don't talk of it! Don't!" Doctor Gorsky interposed. "Another time, Baron, when you are calm and rested, you shall tell me all about it. Leprosy, asylum—I expected something like that. The case is clear enough, and your experiences bear out what I suspected. I had just begun to give Felix my ideas when you regained consciousness. If it is not too much for you, will you listen to me? It may help you to understand."

He pulled the lamp nearer and sat for a while silent in his armchair.

"No," he began. "I do not believe that the drug is the invention of the Siennese Doctor. It is very old and without doubt comes from the East. Fear and Ecstasy! Ever studied the history of the assassins? Perhaps you held in your hands to-day the means, or one of the means, by which the old men of the mountain ruled the souls of men."

"And now it is lost for all time," said Felix.

"For science's sake one might deplore it," replied the Doctor, "but I am glad it has come thus. Solgrub knew what he did when he destroyed that page. The fumes you were absorbing, Baron, had the faculty of working on that part of the brain which is the seat of imagination. They increased the work of your imagination immeasurably. Thoughts passing through your mind took shape and stood before you as plastically as if they were real. Can you understand now why Doctor Salimbeni's experiment should attract, most of all, actors, sculptors and painters? They all hoped for fresh emotions, fresh ideas for their art, from the elation, 'the glow of vision' induced by the potion. They saw the bait, they did not realise the risk they ran."

He got up and thumped the pages of the folio with his fist.

"A trap, a hellish, devilish trap! Don't you see—the seat of imagination is at the same time the seat of fear. That's what it is! Fear and phantasy are tied indissolubly. The great imaginative ones have always also been the martyrs of fear.

Think of Hoffmann, think of Michelangelo and Breughel, the painter, think of Poe——!"

"It was not fear," I said, shuddering. "I have known fear more than once. Fear is something one can overcome. It was not fear or awe or horror, it was a thousand times more than that, it was something no words can express."

"You know fear?" cried the Doctor. "You dare to say you know fear? Perhaps since to-day, Baron. But that which you felt before was only a faint shadow of what has been extinct within man for many thousands of years. True fear, real fear, the fear felt by primitive man when from the circle of his fire he stepped into the darkness, when fiery lightning rent the skies, when he heard the roar of the saurians, the primeval fear of the lonely creature—no living human knows that, and none could stand it. But the nerve that can produce it, that nerve is not dead. It lives; asleep, for thousands of years asleep, it does not stir, it does not move—but the sleeper in our brain, he is a terrible foe."

"And that awful light? The indescribable hue?"

"For this weird phenomenon, too, there may be a physiological explanation. I must precede it by a few words about the construction of the human eye. The seat of the colour sense is in the retina or rather in the fine nerves ending in it, which are excited by the prime colours, that is by rays of a certain wave length. Is it not conceivable that the poisonous fumes you inhaled brought about a temporary change in your retina, which made it sensitive to rays of different, shorter or longer,

wave length? Perhaps that mysterious hue 'of blood and sin and fire' was that invisible colour outside the spectrum, which scientists call 'infra-red'."

"Oh!" cried Felix, "you are speaking of the dark heat rays. Do you suggest that he perceived them as colour with his eyes?"

"Maybe," said Dr. Gorsky. "There is more than one possible explanation of the phenomenon. But is there any sense in forming hypotheses we cannot put to the test?"

He rose to open the window. The wind carried the smell of damp earth and leaves into the room. Small moths began to flutter round the lamp.

"And you think," I asked, "that while you sat here in this room, Eugene Bischoff, alone in the summer-house, had the same visions?"

Dr. Gorsky turned round and came away from the window.

"The same? No," he said, "the phantoms you saw rose from your own subconsciousness. Leprosy! You have been several times in the East. You travelled through eastern Asia. A vague fear of the dread disease may have passed through your mind? Try to remember, Baron! ... Eugene Bischoff? For years the fear haunted him that he might lose Dina, might lose her to you. And in that fateful hour a cruel vision showed him Dina in your arms. What happened after? The shot, that first shot which hit the wall, it was meant for you, Baron. Then horror of what he had done seized him and he turned the revolver on himself. When you entered the room—do you

remember the expression that came into his eyes? He saw you —you were living, you stood before the man who had shot you through the heart. Eugene Bischoff left the world with a feeling of boundless surprise."

"And Solgrub?" asked Felix, from his corner of the window.

"Solgrub? He served as an officer in the Russian army, went through the campaign in Manchuria. What do we know of each other after all? We carry our 'Day of Judgment' within us. Who knows but the dead of those battles rose against him at his last hour."

He stepped to the table and blew the dust from the covers of the old book.

"There it lies, the Monster," he said. "It will do no more harm, its time has gone. Through how many hands has it not passed on its way through the ages! Will you keep it, Felix? If not, I have a lot of old, mouldering rubbish at home. I like the atmosphere of dusty parchments. As to the written pages, they are yours, Baron. Keep them with the other documents of your life, keep them as a mememto of an hour in which I saw you as I never hope to see any human being again."

. . . . .

Dina stood at the door when I left the house. I had to pass by her; there was no other way out. Wild, burning pain rose in my heart. I thought of what had been, and never could be again. Shadows stood between us. For a moment her hand lay in mine, and then she was lost in the dark. I bowed. We parted without a word.

EDITOR'S POSTSCRIPT

At the outbreak of the World War, Gottfried Adalbert, Baron von Yosch and Klettenfeld, went to the front as a volunteer, and fell, after a few months, in the battle of Limanova, when reconnoitring in the Kostelniece woods. Among other papers in the pouch of his saddle was found this story, in which he gives the account of the happenings in the year 1909 in his own way.

During the long Russian evenings of 1914, this novel of Baron von Yosch—one could not call the papers anything else—went from hand to hand among the officers of the Sixth Dragoons. I received it, without any comment, towards the end of the month from any Commanding Officer. Most of us knew the reasons which had forced Baron von Yosch five years before to resign. The suicide of the actor, Eugene Bischoff, had excited wide interest far beyond the capital, and I remembered only too well that part the Baron had played in the affair.

Naturally I expected, when going through the papers, to find him making an attempt to justify himself, a somewhat biased description, but yet not deviating much from the truth. And the first part, narrating in outline the events, does give them correctly. My surprise, therefore, was great when I found that from a certain point onward, the story lost all contact with reality. At this point—(part nine of the account)—it reads very characteristically: "Within me, round me everything was changed; I stood again in the world of reality——"—at this point the story suddenly becomes fantastic. Is it necessary to say in as many words, that Baron von Yosch drove Eugene Bischoff, a man subject to depression and very suggestible in that state, to suicide; that, when taken to task by the family, he took shelter behind a false word of honour? That is the truth. All the rest, Engineer Solgrub's interference, the hunting for the "Monster," the mysterious drug, the visions, are pure invention. In fact, the affair, of which a report had been submitted to His Majesty's Secretariat, ended in the conviction of Baron von Yosch by the court of his regiment.

. . . . .

What was the object Baron von Yosch thought to obtain by this account of the affair? Did he mean to publish it? Did he hope for a re-opening of his case before the court of honour? This seems hardly probable. His mentality was not an evenly developed one, but he did not lack the eye for what is possible. If his notes were not made with the idea of publi-

cation, why this tremendous piece of work, which must have occupied years of his life?

Expert criminologists have an answer to this question. They point to the "playing with the evidence," to that desire of self-torment often seen in convicts trying to prove to themselves that, had fate but willed it, they might have been innocent.

Resistance against what is past and cannot be altered! But looked at from a higher point of view—has not this been the source of all art? From shame and humiliation, from down-trodden pride—did not every great deed rise *de profundis?* Let mobs shout deliriously before a master-piece—to me it unveils the wounded soul of its creator. In the great symphonies of music and colour and thought, I glimpse a shimmer of the weird hue of the red of "blood and sin and fire." A glimmer of the vision which carried the Master for a moment over the horror of his guilt and torment.

. . . . .

I have been able to overcome the scruples of Baron von Yosch's family as to the publication of his memoirs, and they appear with the consent of his relatives.

THE END

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